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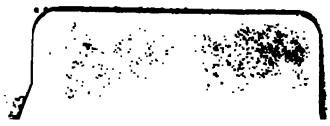

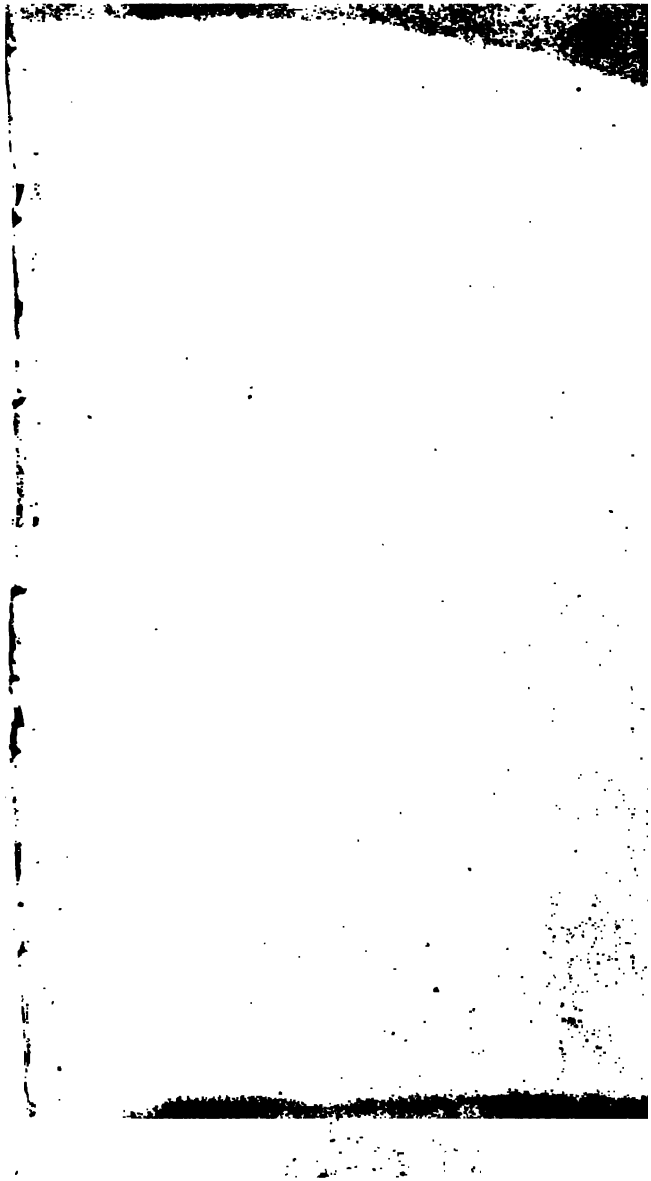

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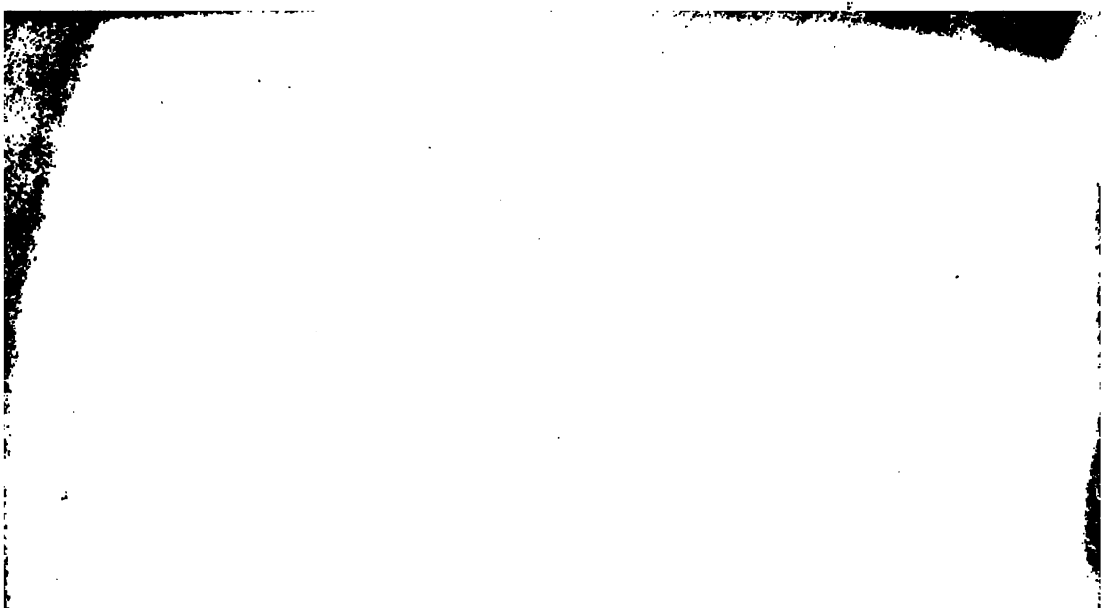
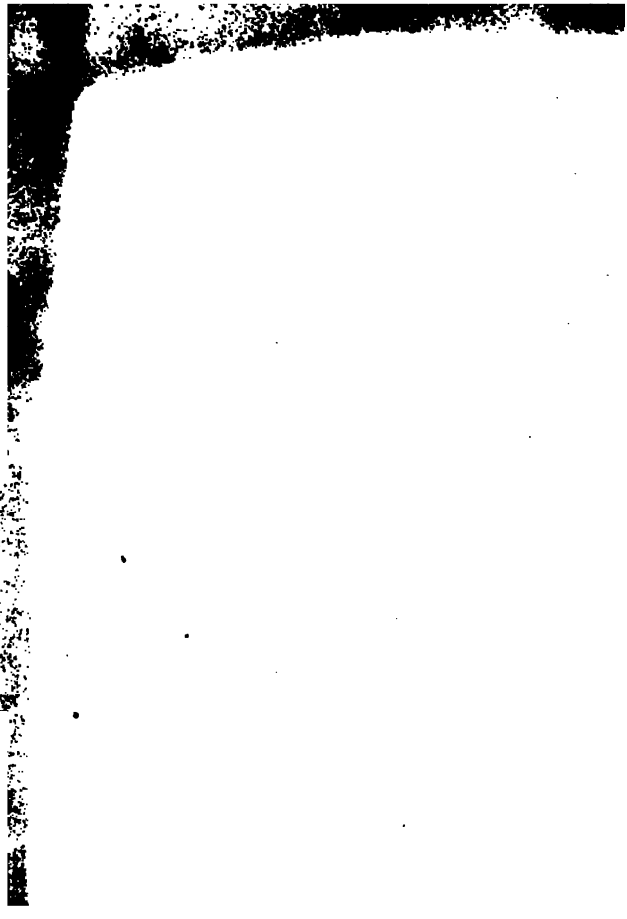




LETTERS

UPON

DIVERS SUBJECTS

CONCERNING

RELIGION

AND

METAPHYSICS.

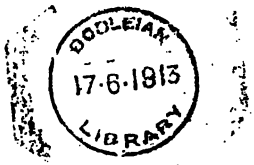
Written by the late

Archbiſhop of CAMBRAY.

Tranſlated from the PARIS Edition in 1718.

GLASGOW:

Printed by ROBERT URIE. MDCCL.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THE following PAPERS, firſt publiſhed at PARIS, in 1718, by the Abbot de Fenelon, nephew to the celebrated Author, contain five Letters. The firſt concerning the exiſtence of God, the proper worſhip of God, and the true church. The ſecond, upon the worſhip of God, the immortality of the ſoul, and free-will. This was written to the duke of Orleans, the late regent, in anſwer to three metaphyſical queſtions, which that great prince had put to the archbiſhop of Cambray, and which are to be ſeen at the head of the letter. In the third, the author treats of the divinity, and of religion. In the fourth, of the idea of infinity, and the liberty of God to create or not create. And, laſtly, the fifth ſpeaks of religion, and the practice of it.

TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

DUKE REGENT

OF

FRANCE.

May it pleaſe your Grace,

YOUR Royal Highneſs was graciouſly pleaſed, at the ſame time, to acquaint me, that the birth of ſome of theſe letters was due to you, and to grant me the honour of laying them in this public manner at your feet.

WHAT, in the eyes of [redacted] world, could I do more advantageous to the memory of their author [redacted] ſhew them the great truſt [redacted] Highneſs honoured him with in his life-time, and that your Highneſs ſtill protects his writings after his deceaſe! All things therefore

concur to determine me to offer the whole to your Highneſs.

THE deep ſciences therein contained are ſo much within the reach of the ſuperior judgment, and uncommon knowlege, of your Royal Highneſs, that the ableſt writers may be proud of your Highneſs's ſentiments, independent of your illuſtrious birth and great rank in the world. I am therefore fully aſſured, that this treatiſe will meet with a general reception, ſince that part of it, which your Highneſs has peruſed, has had your Royal Highneſs's approbation. And I think myſelf highly indebted to your Highneſs for the leave of expreſſing, upon this occaſion, with how much gratitude, zeal, fidelity, and reſpect, I am,

May it pleaſe your Highneſs,

Your Royal Highneſs's

Moſt humble, and

Moſt obedient Servant,

FENELON.

PREFACE,

BY THE

Abbot de FENELON.

THE exiſtence of an infinitely perfect Being; an happy immortality in the admiration of his greatneſs; a worſhip conſiſting in the love of what is moſt perfectly amiable; are ſuch noble and comfortable ideas, that we ought to wiſh them true, although it were impoſſible for us to demonſtrate the truth of them. They raiſe man above himſelf, by cauſing him to return all to the Godhead. When he beholds himſelf, with relation to the ſupreme Being, he ſees himſelf like a nothing, which ought always to diſappear and forget itſelf before that immenſe All: but when he reflects upon himſelf, as on the image of the Godhead, and the object of his complacency, all created beings fly away from before him, as being unworthy to be the end of his love.

And thus, ſeeing together his own littleneſs and his greatneſs, he humbles himſelf without meanneſs, and raiſes himſelf without pride. All the evils and pleaſures of this tranſitory life appear to him like ſo many illuſions of a dream. He takes the ſufferings and adverſities for wholeſome remedies to cleanſe and prepare him for boundleſs happineſs. He looks on riches and greatneſs, as means given him for no other end, than to make his fellow-creatures happy, by imitating God's communicative goodneſs. Whatever happens, he always thinks it the beſt, becauſe he loves that ſupreme will, which regulates and diſpoſes of all things with wiſdom; and that love ſoftens all his pains, and turns his ſorrows into joy. He loves all other men like his brethren, ſprung from the ſame origin, and deſigned for the ſame happineſs. He doth not think himſelf an independent being, created for his own ſake, but a very ſmall parcel of an All, that compoſes human kind; a member of the ſame family, whoſe general good he ought to prefer to his own private intereſt. It is thus that the belief of what religion teaches us, renders man noble in all his paſſions, lovely in ſociety, generous in his whole conduct, and peaceable in all his undertakings.

Unbelief, on the contrary, debaſes and

ſtraitens the ſoul, deſtroys in man all thoſe great ſentiments and generous ideas. It cauſes him to refer all to himſelf. He loves and eſteems no-body, but in as much as they are ſubſervient to his unruly paſſions. Friendſhip, generoſity, all other virtues, which render ſociety ſure, eaſy, and amiable, ſubſiſt no longer than he finds his own account by them. Every man's ſelf-love is continually up in arms againſt that of his neighbour. The happineſs of one man cauſes the unhappineſs of a thouſand. Ambition, jealouſy, hatred, avarice, and contrariety of tempers, render life uncomfortable, and a burden. All human life appear to us but a ſad picture, a general confuſion, a monſtrous medley of contrary and inconſiſtent paſſions; and the expectation of another life, which makes us bear patiently the misfortunes of this, is a thing unknown to the unbeliever. His tranſient pleaſures are continually diſturbed by the troubleſome fear that haunts him, "that poſſibly there may be "a future ſtate." And in this uncertainty, which is the worſt of evils, his ſelf-love, an enemy to himſelf, through an exceſs of madneſs, finds a ſhelter againſt his terrors no where but in the idea of his annihilation, and in the total deſtruction of what is ſo dear to

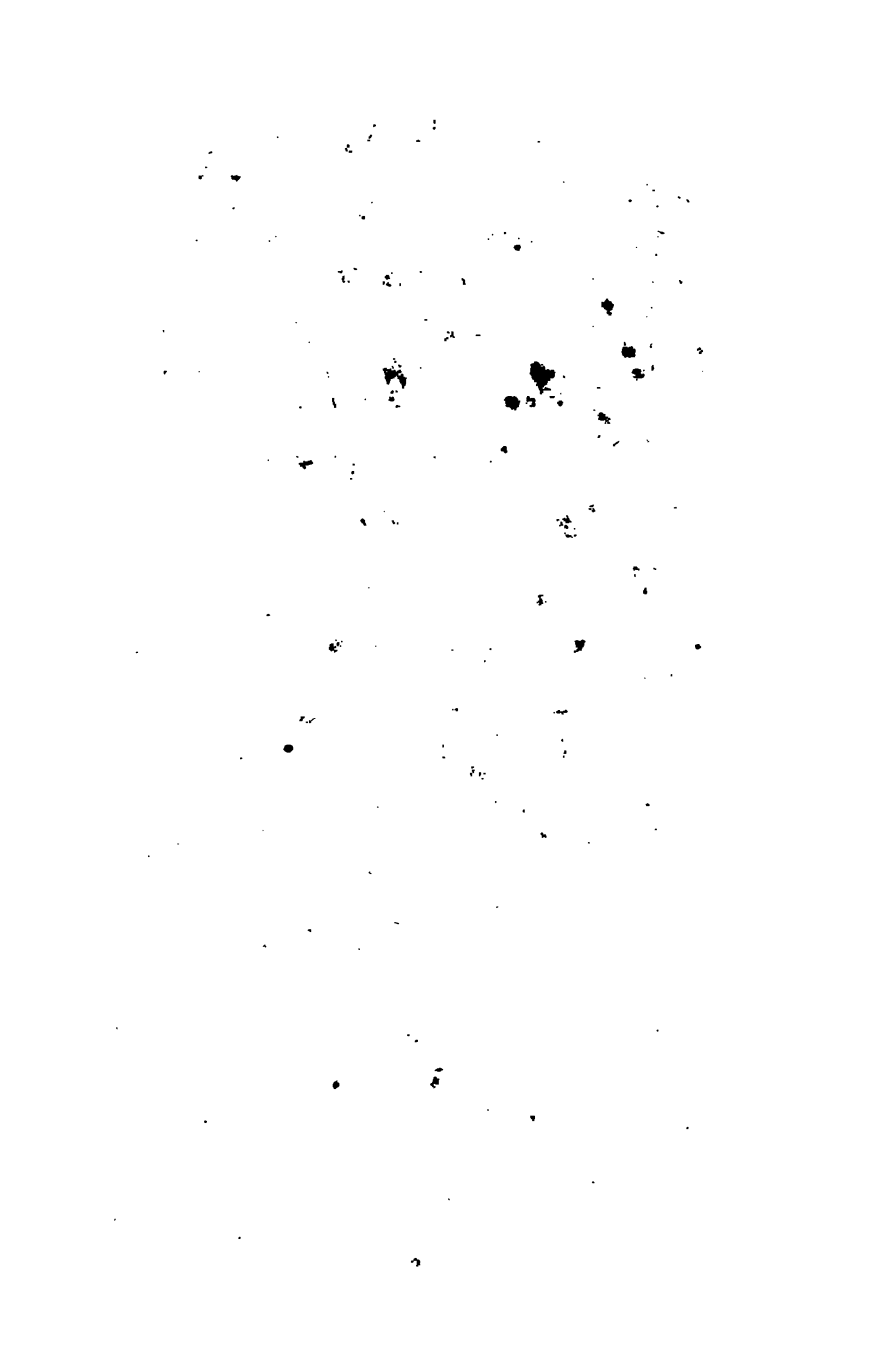
him; of that ſelf which is his idol, and to which he ſacrifices all. What a difference betwixt thoſe two ſyſtems! What compariſon between the pictures of the righteous and the unbeliever! If religion is a romance, it is a moſt charming, and a pleaſing one.

But thanks to the ſupreme wiſdom; his truths are not only lovely and comfortable; they are moreover evident and demonſtrable. There are two ways of proving them. One by dry and abſtracted arguments, too refined and intricate for the greateſt part of mankind. Thoſe demonſtrations may convict the underſtanding by their evidence, but the will is neither amended nor altered by them.

There are another ſort of proofs, which operate on the ſoul of man, give him a taſte of truth at the very ſight of it, and which unite clear knowlege and noble paſſions. Such is the character of the following letters. They were written by a prelate, who endeavoured to make men, at the ſame time, Chriſtians and philoſophers. No leſs a performance could have been acceptable to thoſe they were directed to. The Great Prince, who was the occaſion of ſome of theſe Letters, poſſeſſed that ſuperiority of knowlege and genius, which rendered uſeleſs all other helps to demonſtrations purely metaphyſical. They could not e-

ſcape his penetrating eye. There was need of proofs capable of intereſting a great ſoul, proofs ſo much the more convincing, as they are ſimple, open, convincing proofs; I ſay, whoſe evidence is no ways obſcured by attacking them, which men even ſuppoſe true in the bottom and ſecret corners of their hearts, whilſt their underſtanding labours in vain to doubt of them.

This is the true import of this treatiſe.



LETTERS

UPON

DIVERS SUBJECTS

CONCERNING

RELIGION

AND

METAPHYSICS.

LETTER I.

Of the being of a God: of the worſhip worthy of him; and of the true church.

SIR,

YOU need not have made the leaſt apology for the length of your two letters; they have both edified and moved me: I perceive in them the moſt extenſive candor and ſincere love for truth, a

religious care to find it, a great zeal for religion, and a confidence you put in my willingneſs to aſſiſt you therein. It is true, I ſeem ſometimes reſolved to concern myſelf with nothing but what my function immediately requires at my hands; yet, I am none of thoſe ſtarched bigots, who ſtart at ſhadows, and are ſcandalized at every trifle. I am always ready to examine into any ſyſtem, or to hear any objections propoſed: it would be impoſſible to eſtabliſh any thing ſolid, if perſons zealous for religion did not freely, and without fear of ſiniſter interpretations, communicate to each other the captious arguments by which ſome attempt to darken it. What makes me uneaſy, is, that I perceive you wrote when under a feveriſh indiſpoſition. I was in the ſame condition when I read your letter, which has yet left me very weak: my phyſicians forbid me all things that require application of mind; yet, I cannot ſee which way it is poſſible to anſwer you, without writing a whole volume. Why cannot I be in your cloſet with you, and in perfect health, *impertranſito medio*, as the ſchoolmen call it? But being, as I hope, on the mending hand, I ſhall now take the liberty of repreſenting to you my thoughts upon divers points.

1ſt, I have not, as yet, read the preface, which you have ſeen: the author of it is a man of great capacity, for whom I have a value: but, abſtractedly from what it contains, I own, that the ſyſtem of Spinoſa ſeems to me eaſily overthrown; as ſoon as it is attacked on any ſide, its pretended chain breaks aſunder. According to that philoſopher, two men, (one of which ſays Yes; the other No: the one is in the wrong, the other in the right; the one is a villain, the other a very virtuous good man) are but one individual being. This is what I defy any man in his right ſenſes to believe true in practice. The ſect of Spinoſiſts therefore are a ſect of liars, and not philoſophers. Beſides, it is not poſſible to know the quality of a thing, but as far as you know already the thing qualified. It is neceſſary to know a coloured body to conceive a colour; a moveable body to conceive the motion thereof, *etc.* So that Spinoſa ſhould firſt of all give us an idea of that infinite ſubſtance, which, in its ſimple and indiviſible being, reconciles the moſt oppoſite modifications or qualities, one of which is the negative of the other; he muſt find an infinite multiplication in a perfect unity; he muſt ſhew variations and limits in a being

which is invariable and unlimited. Thoſe are enormous contradictions.

2*dly*, The modiſh Free-thinkers of our times do not embrace the ſyſtem of Spinoſa. They value themſelves upon their owning a God, Creator of all things, whoſe wiſdom ſhines in all his works. But according to them, this God could not be accounted good or wiſe, if he had given man a free-will; that is, the power of ſinning, to run aſtray from his propoſed end, to overthrow order, and loſe himſelf eternally. According to them, man impoſes on himſelf, when he fancies he is maſter of his choice between two contraries. This flattering illuſion, ſay they, proceeds from the will of man's being incapable of conſtraint in it's proper act, which is it's volition. I cannot be determined by any thing but it's pleaſure, which is it's only ſpring. Between different objects of pleaſure, it is always the ſtrongeſt, that invincibly and infallibly determines it. So that it never willeth, but what pleaſeth it moſt to will. This, in my opinion, forms a liberty which is no better than a ridiculous chimera. Man, ſay they, is conſtantly neceſſitated to will one ſingle object, as much from the inward diſpoſition of his organs, as from the circumſtances of external objects on every occaſion:

he fancies that he chuſes, whilſt he is compelled to will always that, which preſents itſelf to him in the moſt pleaſing form. According to this ſyſtem, by taking away all real liberty, man is neither liable to praiſe or diſpraiſe, and conſequently is freed from all apprehenſions of hell. He admires God without fearing him, and lives without remorſe, following the impulſe of his paſſions. This is the ſyſtem which charms all the libertines of our days.

3*dly*, You are much in the right to require ſuch motives for believing religion, as are proportioned to the ſimpleſt and meaneſt underſtandings. The difficulty of finding reaſons thus proportioned, and yet convincing, tempts you to believe, that God deſigns ſalvation to ſuch elect only, whom he draws to him, more by moving their hearts than their underſtandings; more by the powerful influence of his grace, than by the light of reaſon. But, pray, obſerve two inconveniences in this ſyſtem: the firſt is, If it be granted, that faith is given to man by the affections only, without the help of reaſon, and by the blind inſtinct of grace, without a rational diſcernment of that authority to which he ſubmits, to believe the myſteries of religion, it would make Chriſtianity a mere phanaticiſm, and all

Chriſtians bare enthuſiaſts. Nothing could be more dangerous for the quiet and happineſs of ſocieties and mankind. Nothing can render religion more deſpicable or hateful.

The ſecond inconveniency is, that according to this ſyſtem, it would be true, that God damns almoſt all mankind, becauſe they do not believe, and do not keep all his commandments; although it were equally impoſſible for them to believe or keep thoſe commandments for want of helps to believe, or fulfil his will proportioned to their wants. To give an idea of it ſo contrary to the goodneſs of God, would render religion ſcandalous, and raiſe all mankind againſt it.

4thly, St. Auſtin, who cannot be charged of having been too looſe in any of the points relating to God's grace, has thought, that he could not juſtify the goodneſs and juſtice of God, againſt the blaſphemous imputations of the Manichei; but by avowing, that no man is beholden to God for any thing, but "for "what he has actually received from him." From whence he infers two things; one is, that every man has received a previous help, and proportioned to his occaſions, to overcome the temptations of his concupiſcence, to avoid all evil, and to practiſe what is good, conſonant to his underſtanding. The other,

that he has received talents wherewith to vanquiſh his ignorance, "in ſeeking with "care and piety, if he wills it," whatever he wants to move him to belief; in which caſe, providence would furniſh him with ſuitable means to come nearer and nearer to the faith of myſteries, to the virtues of the goſpel, and the means of ſalvation. The internal, as well as the external, means of providence are inexpreſſible, and of an infinite variety, according to that father of the church. It is as impoſſible to explain them at large, as it is impoſſible to deſcribe how a man, by different ſteps, is arrived to a certain degree of wiſdom and virtue, or to the oppoſite defects and prejudices, *etc.* One reaches thither by the innumerable variety and combinations of education, example, reading, converſation, friends, experience, reflection, and by internal inſpirations; by which latter, God inſenſibly operates on the ſoul. It would not only be impoſſible for other men to be very particular in aſſigning the reaſons which have moved another man to a certain courſe of life, but even that man himſelf could hardly afterwards trace his way back again, and give a detail of all the motives which, from within and without, have been the ſprings that determined his affections in his choice. That,

which every one cannot do for himſelf, will be God's taſk at the day of judgment. He will there obtain the victory, becauſe he will unfold to every one all the ſecret corners of his heart, in a chain of means, by which it was in his own power to ſeek, and to know truth, to love, to follow it, and therein to find his ſalvation. Theſe means, though not to be explained ſingly, are yet very ſure all together; their variety, their ſecret combination, their eaſily dropping out of our memories, do often bereave us of the diſtinct knowlege thereof: but then doth not God, who is infinitely juſt and good, deſerve to be credited about the concatenation, and the proportion, of thoſe means which he has prepared? Is he not a better judge of them than ourſelves, ſince we neglect thoſe means ſo far as ſcarce ever to regard them? If man, upon waking from his ſleep, found himſelf, on a ſudden, in a deſart iſle, what prodigious pains would he take to find out, if poſſible, by what hazard he had been carried thither? We come into this world all on a ſudden, as fallen from the ſkies; we neither know what we are, nor whence we came, nor whither we are come, nor with whom we live, nor whither we ſhall go, upon our departure from hence. Who is it that ſheweth the leaſt curioſity in this

important myſtery? No-body cares to unravel it. We amuſe ourſelves with every thing; we want to know all things, except the only one, which, above all things, concerns us. This monſtrous lazineſs is the great ſin of unbelief. *Non pie quaerunt*, ſaith St. Auſtin. What would not men be capable of, if they were ſincere, humble, docile, and as diligent in the enquiry, as ſo great a good deſerves. Do not children, in a very ſhort time, learn to diſtinguiſh, and to name things of a common or a neceſſary uſe in life, and even a whole language? Do not the rude and booriſh people acquire the nicety of all mechanical arts? That is not all: how ſubtle and profound is man in his ſearch after evil! His underſtanding ſeems no where defective, but in his application to what is good. He is only dull in thoſe things which he doth not affect. Love truth as you love mony, and you ſhall come at the bottom of the darkeſt things. Whenever God ſhall lay before man all the natural endowments of reaſon, and all the ſupernatural helps granted him to believe; when he ſhall demonſtrate, that thoſe gifts would have procured him ſtill greater towards his ſalvation, if he had not neglected the firſt; then will he, at one view, behold all thoſe things to which he was blind

here below. And although this juſtice of God ſhould be incomprehenſible, yet ought we to believe it, without comprehending the ſame. But man rather chuſeth to flatter himſelf, ſhake off the yoke, ſuppoſe that God is wanting to him, diſpute about his free-will; though he cannot be in earneſt in his doubts, and to live without law or rule, juſtifying ſuch his conduct, by laying the blame upon the Almighty.

5thly, It is true, that it is neceſſary to produce proofs proportioned to the weak and groſs apprehenſion of almoſt all mankind, to bring them under that authority which propoſeth myſteries to them, as the ſubject of their faith. But let us obſerve two things; one is, that the moſt narrow and dull underſtanding acquires ſtrength, and opens, in proportion, as it delights in things, which it has occaſion to know and penetrate into. The other, that we ought to diſtinguiſh betweeen that knowlege which apprehends and retains the idea of truth, and that which enables man to go to the bottom of it, and to confute all the vain ſubtilties that may cloud that truth, which is clear and naked in itſelf. It is not neceſſary that every clown ſhould apprehend religion, ſo well as to anſwer and clear up all the difficulties, which pride or the

paſſions caſt about it. It is ſufficient, that the unlearned believe what is true, upon a true argument; though it be but implicitly known to him. If you reaſon with a huſbandman about the plaineſt ſubjects of agriculture, you will certainly puzzle him, he will not be able to anſwer you; but for all that, you ſhall not put him out of his right way, and he will continue to plough and manure his lands in the ſame certain method. This is the caſe of the unlearned, as to religion.

6thly, It is ſome time ſince I thought it neceſſary to form a plan, containing proofs of the truths neceſſary to ſalvation, and thoſe all together, really concluding to the purpoſe, and proportionate to the capacity of the illiterate. I formerly requeſted this very earneſtly of a great prelate. He often promiſed it me. I could wiſh myſelf capable of performing it. This treatiſe ought to be very ſhort, though ſuch an undertaking at large would require not only a great labour, but alſo great talents to execute it rightly. Nothing requires a greater genius, than a work wherein the author is to level all the great and exalted truths, to the capacity of thoſe that have no genius at all. To ſucceed therein, one muſt reach every thing, and, at the ſame time, make a comprehenſion of the two

oppoſite extremes of mankind. One muſt be underſtood by the illiterate, and, at the ſame time, confute the bold criticiſms of men who make an ill uſe of their parts againſt truth. I can, at preſent, give you but a very looſe and defective idea of that plan; but what I ſhall lay down of it in haſte, and for our private uſe, is without any conſequence; you will eaſily conceive more of it than what I can ſet down in a few lines; and ſee here rather a table of contents than an explanation of the argument.

A proof of the three principal heads neceſſary to ſalvation, which ought to ſubject, to the yoke of faith, the weak and illiterate, without examination.

ARTICLE I.

There is a God infinitely perfect, who has created the univerſe.

THERE is need only of opening our eyes, and to ſhake off all prejudices, to perceive, without reaſoning, the power and wiſdom of the Creator, which ſhines in all

all his works. If the moſt learned man oppoſes this truth, I ſhall not enter into an argument with him: I ſhall only deſire of him the liberty to ſuppoſe, that a ſtorm has caſt him on a deſart iſle; where he finds a houſe of the beſt architecture, richly furniſhed, adorned with pictures of the greateſt maſters: he goes into a ſtudy, where he finds a numerous collection of good books, artfully ranged in their particular claſſes; yet he meets with no man in that whole iſland; it behoves me only to aſk him, whether it be mere chance, without any induſtry, which has produced all he beholds. I dare defy him, with his utmoſt endeavours, ever to ſatisfy himſelf, that ſo vaſt a number of ſtones, ſo artfully diſpoſed, the rich furniture ſo aptly contrived, ſo well proportioned to the ſtructure, and decently placed; that thoſe pictures which ſo finely imitate nature, thoſe books which ſo exactly treat upon the moſt ſublime ſubjects and ſciences, were only a pure accidental combination: that ingenious man may, perhaps, find out ſome ſubtilties to maintain the ſpeculative part of this abſurd paradox; but in practice he will find it impoſſible to entertain any doubt about the induſtry that ſhines out in that building. If he ſhould boaſt of

his being doubtful in it, you may ſwear he believes his own conſcience. That incapacity of doubting is rightly called a full conviction: and here you may, in a manner, ſee the utmoſt limits of human reaſon; it can go no farther. This compariſon demonſtrates, how we cannot but be convinced of the being of a God, when we look upon this univerſe. Can any body doubt that this great work doth not ſhew infinitely more art than the houſe juſt mentioned? The difference between a philoſopher and a labourer conſiſts in this, that the latter doth immediately embrace and follow, with ſimplicity, that which ſtrikes his eye-ſight; whereas the philoſopher, ſeduced by his vain prejudices, employs all the ſubtilty of his reaſoning to confound his own reaſon. Behold then, and ſee here, the being of a God ſet it its trueſt light; for every one in his own ſenſes, who is intent, and free of pride and paſſion, far from having occaſion for reaſoning, all he has to fear is his ſubtle reaſon; he has no more cauſe to meditate for the finding of a God at the ſight of the univerſe, than to ſuppoſe the watch-maker preſent at the ſight of a watch, or the architect, when he ſees a houſe.

ARTICLE II.

Chriſtianity only is a worſhip worthy of God, or becoming him.

IT is the Chriſtian religion only whoſe eſſential part is, "The love of God." Other religions were grounded on "the fear of "the gods," who were to be appeaſed and courted for their favours, at the expence of ſolemn adorations, prayers, and offerings. But Chriſtianity, inſtituted by Jeſus Chriſt, obliges us to love God above ourſelves, and to love ourſelves only for his ſake. The Paradiſe itſelf, promiſed us as a reward, is to be perfect and eternal love. It requireth ſelf-denial, *abneget ſe ipſum*, which excludes all ſelf-love, to bring us to love ourſelves through charity, as ſomething to which God has a a proper claim, and which he bids us love in him. This overturning of the whole man is the re-production of order, and the birth of the new man. This is what the induſtry of man could not have found out. It was neceſſary that a ſuperior power ſhould turn man againſt himſelf, to force him to pronounce

that thundering ſentence againſt his ſelf-love. Nothing is ſo evidently juſt, and yet nothing checks ſo violently the very ſoul of man, who is his own idol. It is impoſſible to honour God ſufficiently, but by that ſupreme love. *Nec colitur ille niſi amando*, ſaith St. Auſtin in many places. How cometh it then, that almoſt all men have herein been miſtaken? Inſtead of offering, and ſacrificing themſelves, they have carried to the altar burnt-offerings, incenſe, and other gifts. Tell the moſt ſimple and ignorant man, that we muſt love God the Father who has created us for his ſake. This immediately enters his heart, unleſs pride and ſelf-love make him rebel; he has no occaſion to hear debates and particulars upon the argument, he inſtantly is ſenſible that therein is contained the whole ſum of religion: now, this worſhip he can only find in Chriſtianity; ſo that there is no room either for choice or deliberation; all other worſhip is no religion. The religion of the Jews is but an introduction, or rather but a ſketch or ſhadow of that promiſed worſhip: take away, from the law of Moſes, the coarſe-thread figures, temporal bleſſings, fat of the earth, celeſtial dew, myſterious promiſes, infirmities diſpenſed with, or tolerated, and the legal ceremonies, there will remain the be-

ginning of Chriſtianity only. Chriſtianity is nothing elſe than the overthrow of the idolatry of ſelf-love, and the eſtabliſhment of the true worſhip of God by ſupreme love. Enquire narrowly, you will meet with this true worſhip, unfolded, purified, and perfect, no where but among Chriſtians. They alone know that God deſerves eternal love. I do not mention the Turks, they do not deſerve it; their religion is no more than the coarſeſt, moſt ſervile and entirely mercenary part of the worſhip of the moſt carnal Jews, to which they have added the admiration of a falſe prophet, who owns himſelf that he had no certain proof of his being one. Whoever is upright, and poor of ſpirit, can only abide with Chriſtians, becauſe it is only among them he can meet with perfect love. As ſoon as he has found it there, he has found all he wanted, and is ſenſible, that there is nothing more left for him to ſeek. The myſteries do not ſcare him; he conceives, that ſince all nature is impenetrable to his weak underſtanding, he ought not to be ſurprized at his not apprehending all the ſecrets of God; his very weakneſs makes him ſtrong, his darkneſs doth enlighten him, to make him diſtruſtful of himſelf, and docile in God. He doth not

ſcruple to believe that God, who is infinite love, has vouchſafed to come himſelf in a body like unto ours, to temperate the rays of his glory, to teach us to love, and to love himſelf within us. It is in this ſenſe true, that true religion is diſcerned by the heart, and not by the underſtanding. In reality one finds it nakedly or merely through the love of God worthy of infinite love, not through the ſubtle reaſonings of philoſophers. Socrates himſelf had found next to nothing; whereas now an humble poor woman, or a docile mechanic, finds all by finding love. *Confiteor tibi, pater*, etc. The love of God decides all without farther diſpute, in favour of Chriſtianity. It is in that ſenſe Tertullian ſaith, that the ſoul is naturally Chriſtian.

ARTICLE III.

None but the catholic church can teach this worſhip, in a manner proportioned to the occaſions of all mankind.

ALL men, but more eſpecially the illiterate, have need of an authority to determine, without engaging them into inquiries and debates, of which they are manifeſt-

ly incapable. How can it be expected, that peaſants, and ſuch as are obliged to get their bread by their labour, ſhould examine the original texts, the different editions and tranſlations, and fix the meanings of the bible? God might be thought to have been wanting to the occaſions of almoſt all mankind, if he had not aſſigned them an infallible authority to ſave them that impoſſible examen, and to prevent their being led into errors. The illiterate man, therefore, who knows the goodneſs of God, and is ſenſible of his own inability, ought to ſuppoſe ſuch an authority given by God, and humbly ſeek it, to ſubmit thereunto without reaſoning. Where ſhall he find that? All ſocieties, ſeparated from the catholic church, do ground their ſeparation upon their offering liberty to every individual man, to judge for himſelf, about the ſenſe of the ſcriptures, and by pretending to ſhow him that the bible doth contradict that antient church. The firſt ſtep, therefore, which a private man ought to take, before he hearkens to thoſe ſectaries, is, to make himſelf the judge between them and the church, which they have forſook. Now, where is that ſenſible ruſtic, in his own affairs, who, without a ridiculous and ſcandalous preſum-

ption, can ſay, I am going to examine, whether the antient church has well or ill interpreted the bible? Yet this is the eſſential point, and true cauſe of the ſeparation of the branches from the old ſtem. Every illiterate man, who is ſenſible of his ignorance, ought to have an averſion to that act of preſumption which makes him begin thus. He looks out for an authority which may ſave him that piece of preſumption, and the trouble of that examen of which he is incapable. All the new ſects, according to their fundamental principle, call to him, read, reaſon, and then judge. The catholic church only tells him, do not reaſon, do not judge, be ſatisfied to be taught, be humble: God has promiſed me his Spirit to preſerve you from errors. Which of the two ſhall this poor illiterate man hearken to? Thoſe who require impoſſibilities of him, or thoſe who promiſe him what is moſt ſuitable to his weakneſs, and worthy the goodneſs of his Maker? Let us behold a paralitic, who wants to get out of his bed, becauſe his houſe is on fire; he addreſſes five people, who tell him, you muſt riſe, run away, pierce the croud, and get you gone out of the flames; but at laſt he perceives a ſixth, who tells him, be not afraid, truſt in me, I will carry you off myſelf, up-

on my back: ſhall he believe the five, who adviſe him to what he knows himſelf is impracticable? ſhall he not rather believe him, who promiſes that aſſiſtance which he knows proportioned and ſufficient to his occaſion and weakneſs? Without any farther deliberation, he gives himſelf up to that man, and reſolves to be quiet and governable in his boſom. This is exactly the caſe of a humble illiterate man; he cannot ſeriouſly liſten to thoſe ſects, who would have him read, reaſon, and judge, becauſe he finds himſelf incapable of any of them; but he is comforted, when he hears the antient church ſay to him, be ſenſible of your own weakneſs, humble yourſelf, be compliant, truſt in the goodneſs of God, who has not left us without the means, and ſuitable aſſiſtance of going to him; let me alone, I will carry you in my boſom: nothing is eaſier, no way ſhorter than this, to arrive at truth. The illiterate man has occaſion for neither book nor reaſoning to find out the true church. With his eyes ſhut, he knows for certain, that all thoſe churches, who would make him his own judge, are falſe; and that only that can be the true one, which bids him believe with humble ſubmiſſion. Inſtead of books and reaſoning, he wants

nothing but his own weakneſs and the goodneſs of God, to avoid being ſeduced by flattering inſinuations, and to remain in the ſtate of an humble compliance. He wants only to be rightly ſenſible of his ignorance to be determined: this ignorance ſtands him in ſtead of infallible ſcience. The more ignorant he is, the more doth his ignorance tell him how abſurd thoſe ſects are, who would ſet him up for a judge of things he is not able ſo much as to examine. On the other hand, the learned themſelves have numberleſs occaſions of being humble and ſenſible of their own inabilities. The more they reaſon, the more they doubt, even more than the illiterate: they diſpute among themſelves for ever, and grow obſtinate and tenacious of the moſt abſurd doctrines. So that they have as much occaſion, as the moſt ignorant people, for a ſupreme authority, to humble their preſumption, amend their prejudices, determine their diſputes, fix their uncertainties, reconcile them to each other, and unite them with the multitude. That authority, ſuperior to all reaſoning, where ſhall we find it? It cannot be in any of thoſe ſects, which are formed only by cauſing men to reaſon, and making them judges of the ſcripture above the church. It cannot, therefore, be found any

where, but in that antient church, which is called the catholic church. What is more ſimple, ſhorter, more adapted to the weak underſtandings of the vulgar than a deciſion? For the apprehending of which, there is only need of feeling one's ignorance, and not to attempt impoſſibilities. Abandon that examen which is viſibly impoſſible to you, and a ridiculous conceit, and you will find yourſelf immediately a good catholic.

I apprehend very well, Sir, that innumerable difficulties will be ſtarted at what I have here laid down: but are there none raiſed to make us doubt the very being of bodies, and queſtion the certainty of things we really behold, which we hear and feel every moment, as if our whole life was but the illuſion of a dream? I dare aver, that in the three principles I have laid down, enough will be found to diſſipate all objections in a few words, and without entering into any intricate or ſubtle debates.

Yet I cannot end this letter, Sir, without not intimating, that you do not ſeem to have a ſufficient value for St. Auſtin. It is true, that father wrote in an age of a very indifferent taſte; his ſtile ſhews it; he has wrote without any order, haſtily, with a luxuriancy of thought, and, chiefly, when he was urged

to it by his occaſions of inſtructing, or refuting his adverſaries. Plato and Des Cartes, whom you ſo highly value, had leiſure to meditate, without diſturbance, and bring their works to perfection: yet have thoſe two authors their failings: for example, what can be more weak than the proofs which Socrates alleges for the immortality of the ſoul?

Beſides, is he not wavering and unfixed about ſome of the moſt fundamental truths, without the certainty of which his moral precepts loſe their aim? What is more defective than the infinite world of Des Cartes? If a collection was made of all the true ſayings of St. Auſtin, ſcattered looſely throughout his works, there would be more metaphyſics found than in thoſe two authors. I cannot ceaſe to admire the extent, the clearneſs and fertility of that ſublime genius.

I wiſh, Sir, I could be for one month with you in a loneſome place, where we might have nothing elſe to do but to ſearch together what might feed and edify our ſouls. *O rus, quando ego te aſpiciam, quandoque licebit*, etc.

No-body can honour you with more lively ſentiments, and more worthy of you, than I ſhall do the remainder of my days.

LETTER II.

Concerning the worſhip of God, the immortality of the ſoul, and the free-will of man.

SIR,

THE paper, you have done me the honour to ſend me, contains three queries.

1*ſt*, Can the infinitely perfect Being require any worſhip from beings that are infinitely inferior to him?

2*dly*, Is it poſſible to demonſtrate, that the ſoul of man is immortal?

3*dly*, Is it conſiſtent to believe, that the infinitely perfect Being has given man a free-will, which includes a liberty of overſetting order?

CHAP. I.

The infinitely perfect Being doth require a worſhip from all intelligent creatures.

THE truth of the exiſtence of the infinitely perfect Being is ſo clear, and ſo fruitful a principle, that we need only conſult it without prejudice, and follow it ſincerely, to find therein all we want to know of that neceſſary Being. And here, in my opinion, you ſee the truths to be drawn from it.

I.

WE cannot reaſonably doubt, that ſo perfect a Being doth love himſelf: for being juſt, he owes an infinite love to his infinite perfection. Hence I infer, that if this Being ſhould produce any work beſides himſelf, without producing it for his own ſake, that therein he ſhould act more imperfectly than the imperfect beings, who act for the love of him. There are men, thoſe imperfect beings! who, in all their works, propoſe to themſelves no other end, than to pleaſe that

perfect Being. If, therefore, the perfect Being did unjuſtly refuſe, to himſelf, the end of his actions to his own advantage, which the imperfect beings aim at in their actions, he would act leſs perfectly than pious men; which is utterly impoſſible. We ought, therefore, to conclude, with the Bible, *That God has made all things for his own ſake.* On the one hand he is infinitely perfect in himſelf: on the other hand infinitely juſt, becauſe juſtice is part of the infinite perfection. He owes, therefore, to himſelf all what he doth, and it is not lawful for him to give away any of his rights. Such is his greatneſs, that he can act for no other than himſelf. He calls himſelf *the jealous God.* Jealouſy, which is unbecoming and ridiculous in man, is ſupreme juſtice in God. He ſaith, as he ought, *I will not give my glory to another.* He owes himſelf, and pays all to himſelf. All proceeds from him; all ought to return unto him; otherwiſe order would be deſtroyed. The author of the paper ſent me acknowleges, that the all-perfect Being has drawn men from nothing; he ought likewiſe to own that that Being has created them for himſelf. If he acted without any end, he would act in a blind and ſenſeleſs manner, wherein his wiſdom could have no ſhare. If he acted for an

end, leſs exalted than himſelf, he would debaſe his action below that of every virtuous man who acts all for the ſepreme Being. It would be abſurdity itſelf. Let us therefore conclude, without fear of miſtaking, *that God has made every thing for his own ſake.*

II.

THAT ſupreme Being, which we call God, cannot have created the intelligent beings for his own ſake, without willing, at the ſame time, that thoſe beings ſhould employ their underſtandings to know and to admire him; and their will to love and obey him. The order or juſtice of things requires that our intelligence be regulated, and our love be juſt; it is neceſſary, therefore, that God, who is the ſupreme order and juſtice, ſhould will that we love his infinite perfection more than our own bounded perfection; and that we ſhould love his infinite goodneſs above the finite goodneſs which he has endowed us with. This is the true and rational love of juſtice; we are only limited, partaking and depending good beings; whereas the firſt Being is the only goodneſs, the ſpring of all others, unlimited and independent. Our love for that goodneſs ought likewiſe in us to be a love

the only ſpring of all other love, a love without bounds, and a love independent from all other love. On the contrary, the love of ourſelves ought to be a love void of that primitive love; only a ſmaller rivulet derived from that great river, a love ſubſtitute to it, a limited love, and proportioned to the ſmall parcel of goodneſs which is fallen to our ſhare. God is the all, and we are the nothing, that have borrowed a ſmall parcel of that Being to cover ourſelves with. We do not belong to ourſelves, but to him that has made us, and who has given us all, even that which we call myſelf; that ſelf, which is ſo dear to us, and commonly our only God, is, properly ſpeaking, but a ſmall part, that would be the whole. It brings all things to itſelf, and therein doth imitate God, and ſets itſelf up for an idol: that idol muſt be deſtroyed. We muſt bring that ſelf lower, and put it in it's right place again, which is but a ſmall corner of the univerſe in proportion to the little perfection and being it poſſeſſes.

He will come into his rank again to be eſteemed and beloved according to his true merit. And this is the love of juſtice, this is order. This is what God owes to himſelf: this is what is juſt he ſhould require of his creature capable of knowing and loving. It

is needful that, in creating it, he ſhould propoſe, as the end of his work, to make himſelf known as infinite truth, and to make himſelf beloved as univerſal goodneſs; ſo that may be known in him all community of his truth, and beloved in him all community of goodneſs without bounds. As ſoon as that foundation is laid, the whole building will riſe as of itſelf. As ſoon as you ſhall ſuppoſe, that God alone ought immediately to have all our love, and that afterwards this love doth ſpread upon that ſelf, only in the ſame manner as other limited goods in proportion to its limits, then will religion be wholly unfolded in our hearts. You may even leave man to his own heart, if it appears that he loves himſelf only with that love of God, and that ſelf-love is laid aſide.

III.

THIS being agreed on, there remains no farther queſtion about the worſhip of God. There is no other worſhip beſides love, ſays St. Auſtin; *nec colitur niſi amando.* It is the kingdom of God within ourſelves; it is the worſhipping in ſpirit and in truth; it is the only end for which God has made us. He has given us love for no other end than

that we ſhould love him. We muſt re-eſtabliſh order by overthrowing that diſorder which has prevailed. We muſt put God, which is the all, in the room which ſelf did occupy, as if it had been the all, the centre, and univerſal ſpring. That ſelf muſt be tied down, in it's ſmall corner, as a weak and ſmall parcel of the borrowed goodneſs. At the ſame time we muſt reſtore to God the place of the all, and be aſhamed to have uſed him ſo long like a private being, with whom we would make terms, as between equals, to unite or not unite ourſelves with him, to make one's own bargain, or elſe to look out for ſome other ally.

In a word, we muſt place God in the room of that ſelf, which it occupied without ſhame, and put ſelf in that ſmall place where we had reduced God to, after having made him little in compariſon to that ſelf. Bring it about that men think thus, and all doubts are vaniſhed, all the rebellions of mens heart are ſubdued, and all pretences of impiety and irreligion are defeated. I do not enter into reaſonings, I aſk nothing of man; I give him up to his love; let him love with all his heart what is lovely without bounds, and let him do what he pleaſes; and I am ſure, that what will pleaſe him, cannot be any thing

but the moſt pure religion. This is the perfect worſhip; *nec colitur niſi amando.* He will do nothing but love and obey. *The nation of the juſt,* ſaith the ſcripture, *is nothing but obedience and love.*

IV.

It will be objected, that this love is an inward worſhip. But where muſt we look for the external one? Why ſhall we ſuppoſe that God doth require it? But is it not obvious, that the external worſhip is a neceſſary conſequence of the internal worſhip, love? Shew me a ſociety of men who look on each other, as being altogether but one and the ſame family, the father of which is in heaven. Shew me men, who live only by love of that heavenly Father, and love neither their neighbour nor themſelves, but for love of him, and who are but one heart and one ſoul; do not you think, that in this godly ſociety, the mouth will inceſſantly ſpeak from the fullneſs of the heart? They will admire the all-high, they will love the all-good; they will ſing his praiſes, they will bleſs him for all his bounties; they will not ſtop there, they will make him known to all the nations of the univerſe; they will endeavour to help

up their brethren, as ſoon as they ſhall find them tempted by pride, or any carnal paſſion, to abandon the well-beloved. They will ſigh to find the leaſt cooling or abatement of love. They will croſs the ſeas to the remoteſt parts of the world, to make the common Father known and beloved to the forlorn people that have forgot his greatneſs. What is it you call an external worſhip, if this is not one? Then would God be all things in all; he would be the King, Father, and univerſal Friend; he would be the living law of the hearts. All the diſcourſes would be concerning him and for him; he would be conſulted, believed, and obeyed. Alas! if a mortal king, or a father of a mean family, through his wiſdom, acquires the eſteem and confidence of all his children, one ſees nothing elſe beſides honours that are paid him; there is no occaſion to aſk where is his worſhip, or whether any is due to him; all what is done to honour him, to obey him, and acknowlege his favours, is a continual worſhip in every body's view. What would it be then if men were poſſeſſed with the love of God? Their ſociety would be a ſolemn worſhip, like that which is deſcribed to us of the bleſſed in heaven.

V.

It may be replied, that it is needful to prove, that beſides love, and virtues neceſſarily adhering to it, man owes to God public and regulated ceremonies; but thoſe ceremonies are not the eſſential part of religion, which conſiſts in love, and the practice of virtue. Thoſe ceremonies are inſtituted not as being the eſſential part of religion, but only to ſerve as ſigns which ſhow it and nouriſh it in itſelf, and help to communicate it to others. Thoſe ceremonies are in reſpect to God what the tokens of reſpect are to a father, whom his children ſalute, embrace, and ſerve with earneſtneſs; or to a king who is harangued, placed on a throne, ſurrounded with a certain grandeur, and to ſtrike the imagination of the people ſtill more, before whom the great ones kneel. Is it not true, that men commonly tied and attached to viſible objects, and whoſe reaſon is weak, have yet greater need of a ſhew to imprint in them a ſuitable reſpect for an inviſible majeſty, and contrary to all their paſſions, than to produce that effect for a viſible one, who ſtartles their eyes and flatters their ſenſual paſſions? One feels the neceſſity there is of a court for a king,

and yet is unwilling to own the much greater occaſion of a pomp for divine ſervice. This may be ſtiled, not knowing the occaſions of mankind, and to ſtick at circumſtances, when the principal point is yielded.

VI.

AND do we not ſee, that all nations who have adored any divinity, have fixed their worſhip to ſome external demonſtrations, called ceremonies? As ſoon as the internal worſhip is admitted, the external is requiſite to expreſs it, and communicate it to ſociety. Human-kind did offer ſacrifices and gifts till the times of Moſes. Moſes did inſtitute ceremonies in the religion of the Jews. The Chriſtian church has received ſome from Jeſus Chriſt. No matter whether beaſts are killed, incenſe burnt, or the fruits of the earth be offered, provided men have ſigns by which they expreſs their love of God. All the products of the earth are his own gifts to us; to offer, is only returning what we have received; making an acknowlegement that we had it all from him. By thoſe ſigns we call to mind God's majeſty and his bounty; we excite each other to prayers and praiſes of him, and to put our hopes in him; we endeavour

at a certain uniformity of ſigns, to ſhow the union of our hearts, and to prevent diſorders in the common worſhip. When God has not regulated thoſe ceremonies in his written laws, men have followed tradition, going back to the very beginning of the world: when God has regulated thoſe ceremonies by written laws, men have been bound to obſerve them inviolably. Even the Proteſtants, who have found ſo much fault with our ceremonies, have been obliged to retain many of them: ſo conſtant a truth it is, that men have occaſion for ſome. There is need of ceremonies, not ſuch as amuſe or impoſe upon us, but ſuch as are a help to recollect ourſelves, and call to our minds the memory of God's favours. This is the true worſhip of God. Whoever has another idea of it is miſtaken, and entertains wrong notions of it.

VII.

Let any one now compare theſe two ſchemes. In the one each man acknowlegeing the true God, would honour him inwardly after his own manner, without giving any ſign or mark thereof to the reſt of mankind. In the other, men have a common worſhip,

by

by whoſe help every one recollects himſelf, feeds his love, edifies his brethren, makes God known to ſuch of mankind who had no knowlege of him, or have loſt it. O how lovely and moving is that ſpectacle! Is it not plain, that the ſecond ſcheme is a thouſand times more worthy of the perfect Being, and more adapted to the occaſions of mankind than the firſt? Whoever ſhall have taken a true reſolution to prefer God to himſelf, and to carry the yoke of the Lord, will never heſitate between theſe two.

VIII.

IT is objected, that God is infinitely above man; that there is not the leaſt proportion between them; that God has no occaſion for our worſhip; laſtly, that this worſhip of a limited will is unworthy of a Being infinite in his perfections. It is true, that God has no manner of occaſion for our worſhip, without which, he is happy, perfect, and all-ſufficient to himſelf: but, if he wills and commands that worſhip; which, though imperfect, is not unworthy of him; and it can only be for that very worſhip that he has created us; when the queſtion is to know, what doth or

doth not become the infinite Being, we ought not to pretend to penetrate into it with our ſhort-ſighted and weak reaſon. The finite beings cannot comprehend the infinite. It is from the infinite himſelf we ought to learn what he may will or not will. Now, we have plain fact to determine this. On the one hand, we cannot doubt that the infinite Being has created us; on the other, we ſee plainly, that in creating us he could not have a more noble and exalted end than that of being known and beloved by us. It is in vain to allege, that this knowlege and limited love are an end not at all proportioned to the infinite perfection of God. However imperfect that end may be, yet it is the moſt perfect that God could propoſe to himſelf by creating us. To make the thing eaſy, and remove all difficulties, we muſt diſtinguiſh between what the creature can do, and the complacency of God therein. The action of the creature, which knows and loves God, is always neceſſarily imperfect like the creature itſelf that doth it. It is always infinitely below God. But that action, of knowing and loving God, is the nobleſt, and the moſt perfect operation which God can draw from his creature, and which he can propoſe to himſelf as the end of his work. If God could not produce, out

of nothing, any creature, but upon condition to draw therefrom ſome work as perfect as God himſelf, he then could never pretend to produce any creature out of nothing; for there can never be any that ſhall be or become capable of performing any action equally perfect with God himſelf.

The fact, however, is beyond all doubt, that God has created all things out of nothing; his perfection in his productions requires he ſhould have propoſed to himſelf to draw out of his creatures the moſt noble and perfect operation, which their narrow and bounded nature was capable of. Now, this moſt perfect operation of human-kind, is the knowlege and love of God: what God produces from man can be but imperfect, as man himſelf is: yet God draws from him the moſt perfect work which he is any ways able to afford: and it is ſufficient, for the maintaining of order, that God ſhould draw, from his creature, the beſt he can, within the limits he has fixed the ſame. Then he is pleaſed and ſatisfied with his production. His power has effected what his wiſdom requires. He takes delight in his creature, and that very delight is the end which he propoſeth to himſelf. Now, this complacency or delight is not diſtinguiſhed from himſelf; ſo that, properly

ſpeaking, he is himſelf his own end. The accompliſhed action of his own creature is but the ſubject of his complacency; it is wiſdom in which he pleaſeth himſelf; and this complacency is equally with him, infinitely perfect, ſince it is equally juſt and wiſe.

IX.

We cannot doubt but that mankind knows God, and that many among them do love him, or at leaſt have a deſire to love him. It is, therefore, as clear as the ſun, that it was God's will to make himſelf known and beloved; for if God had been unwilling to communicate to us the knowlege and love of him, we could never have either known or loved him. I may therefore aſk, wherefore has God given us the capacity of knowing and loving him? Certainly it is the moſt precious of all his gifts. Has he granted it to us in a blind manner, without reaſon, by mere chance, without deſigning we ſhould make any uſe of it? He has given us corporeal eyes to ſee the light of the ſun; ſhall we believe that he has given us the eyes of the mind, which are capable of diſcerning his eternal truth, without willing that the ſame ſhould be known to us? I own, we can neither know nor love infinitely the

infinite perfection. Our higheſt knowlege will always remain infinitely imperfect in proportion to the infinitely perfect Being. In a word, though we do know God, it can never be but with a limited knowlege; but we know him thus far, that we are ſure in pronouncing what he is not, that we aſcribe to him ſuch perfections, as are ſuitable to his dignity, without being in danger of miſtaking. There is no other being in nature, which we confound with God, and we know how to deſcribe him with his character of infinite, which is only one, and not communicable. It ſeems we know him pretty diſtinctly, ſince the clear idea we have of him doth force us to prefer him to ourſelves. Such an idea, which goes ſo far as to dethrone ſelf, muſt work very powerfully on man, blindly fond of himſelf, to adoration. Never was idea ſo hardly ſtruggled with, and yet came off with ſuch vigor. Let us judge of its ſtrength by what it forces us to own againſt ourſelves. Nothing is ſo ſurprizing as the idea of God, which I carry at the bottom of my heart within myſelf; it is an infinite, contained in a finite being. What I have within myſelf doth exceed me without meaſure. I do not comprehend, how I can contain him within

my mind, and yet I do. It is needleſs to examine how I can keep him within that narrow compaſs, ſince the fact is plain, and not to be denied. This incomprehenſible idea of the divine Being, not to be blotted out, is that which makes me his reſemblance notwithſtanding my imperfection and lowneſs. As he doth know and love himſelf infinitely, I do know and love him according to my meaſure. I cannot know the infinite but with a finite knowlege, and I can only love him with a finite love, as myſelf; yet I know him as being infinite, and I will and endeavour to love him with the greateſt love he has made me capable of. I wiſh it was in my power to put no bounds to my love for a perfection which has no bounds. Once more; it is true, that neither this knowlege nor this love have a perfection equal to their object; but that man, who knows and loves God, according to his meaſure of knowlege and love, is incomparably more worthy of that perfect Being, than that man, who ſhould be as without a God in this world, never ſolicitous either to know or to love him. Herein you ſee two different plans of God's work; the one is as worthy of his wiſdom and of his goodneſs as we can conceive it, the other is unworthy of both, and has no manner of

rational end. It is eaſy to conclude which of theſe two plans God has followed.

X.

WHEN a man humbleth himſelf, he only ſeeks to be independent, it is a deceitful and hypocritical humility. Whilſt he is magnifying to himſelf his lowlineſs, his nothingneſs, and the infinite diſproportion which is betwixt God and himſelf, it is with no other view than to ſhake off God's yoke, and to ſet himſelf up for a ſort of a little divinity of his own liking; by ſatisfying all his inordinate paſſions, and making himſelf the center of every thing about him. Man is glad to place God in an infinite height and diſtance above him, whence he doth not deign either to obſerve us, make us inſtruments of his glory, intereſt himſelf in us, or concern himſelf about us, to correct us, perfect us, reward us, or puniſh us. But is it not apparent, that the infinite diſtance, between God and us, doth not hinder him from being always about and within us; and that it is even that perfection in which he exceeds us infinitely, which enables him to do and operate every thing in us, and to be nearer to us than we are our-

ſelves? How is it poſſible that he, who makes our eyes to ſee, our ears to hear, our underſtandings to know, and our will to love, ſhould not be intent upon every thing, which he operates within us? How can it be he ſhould not intereſt himſelf in what he takes care every moment to produce in us? That attention coſts nothing to an infinite wiſdom and goodneſs. In that, every thing is action, every thing is reſt. We would fain conceive a God ſo far diſtant from us; ſo haughty, and ſo indifferent in his haughtineſs, as to diſdain to watch over mankind; ſo that every one of us, without being under any conſtraint from his looks, might live without rule, following the dictates of his paſſions and pride. By pretending thus to raiſe God, we degrade him; for we make of him a God indifferent as to good or evil, the virtues or vices of his creatures, the diſorder or order of the world, which he has framed. By ſeeming to humble ourſelves, we make ourſelves gods, we overthrow all ſubordination, we give ourſelves the looſe, promiſe ourſelves impunity, and we attempt to place ourſelves even above our reaſon.

Once more, compare theſe two plans, the one offering us a God, wiſe, good, watchful; who ranks, directs, rewards; who will be

known, beloved, and obeyed: the other presents us a God not at all concerning himself with our behaviour, affected with neither virtue nor vice, nor with reason violated, or conformed to, by his creatures; who gives man up to his mad pride and all his brutal desires; who neglects him after he has made him, and doth not care to be either known or beloved by him, though he hath given him all the sufficient faculties to do both. Compare these two plans, and I defy you not to prefer the first to the second.

CHAP. II.

The soul of man is immortal.

THIS question will easily be put in a clear light, if it be but reduced to it's true terms, and separated from what is of a farther extent.

I.

IT is true, that the soul of man is not a being depending on itself, or having a necessary existence. There is but one Being which

has an exiſtence of itſelf, can never loſe that ſame, but doth communicate it to all others according to it's own pleaſure. God would have no need of acting any thing to annihilate the ſoul of man. He need only ceaſe for a moment, or ſuſpend the action by which he continues it's creation at every moment, to plunge the ſame again into the abyſs of non-exiſtence and nothingneſs, whence he drew it; juſt as a man needs only to let fall his hand to drop a ſtone which he held up in the air, that inſtantly falls by it's own weight. So that the rational query is not here to know, whether the ſoul of man can be annihilated in caſe it ſhould ſo pleaſe God; for it is apparent that it may ſo be; and that it entirely depends on the will of God.

II.

The queſtion is to know, whether the ſoul has in itſelf natural cauſes of corruption or deſtruction. which put a period to it's exiſtance after a certain time; and whether it can be philoſophically demonſtrated, that the ſoul has in itſelf no ſuch cauſes. See here the negative proof of it. As ſoon as you have eſtabliſhed the moſt real and ſolid difference between the body and ſoul, you are vaſtly

ſurprized at their union; and it is only by the medium of God's might you can conceive how he could unite and cauſe a harmony in the actions of two ſo different natures. Bodies do not think; ſouls are neither diviſible, extended, figurated, nor endowed with bodily faculties. Aſk any ſenſible perſon, whether his preſent thought be round or ſquare, white or yellow, hot or cold; diviſible in ſix or in twelve different parts; inſtead of giving you a ſerious anſwer he will laugh at you. Aſk him, if the atoms, of which his body is made up, be wiſe or fooliſh, if they know each other, if they be virtuous, have a friendſhip for each other; if the round atoms have more wit or goodneſs than the ſquare ones; he will laugh again, becauſe he will not be able to believe that you are ſerious in the enquiry after thoſe inconſiſtencies. Go yet farther with him; ſuppoſe atoms of the figure he ſhall fix upon, deſire him to make them as minute as ever he pleaſes, and aſk him whether, at laſt, he has a proſpect of that point of time, when thoſe atoms, which had no knowlege at all before, ſhall, all on a ſudden, begin to know each other, to know all that is about them, and to ſay, within themſelves, I do believe this, but I do not believe that; I love ſuch an object, but I hate the other. He will think

you aſk him childiſh queſtions; he will laugh at them, as at the moſt extravagant metamorphoſes or fables. The ridiculouſneſs of the queries ſhews perfectly well, that none of all the properties of a body enter into the notions we have of a ſpirit or a thinking being; and on the contrary, none of the properties of a ſpirit enter into the idea we have of a body or an extended being. The real diſtinction, and the entire diſlikeneſs of the nature of thoſe two beings being thus ſettled, no man ought to be ſurprized that their union (which conſiſts only in a ſort of harmony or mutual relation between the thoughts of the one and the motions of the other) ſhould have an end, without either of thoſe beings being diſſolved or ceaſing to exiſt. There is more reaſon to wonder how two beings, different in their natures, can continue together any time, and act in concert. Why ſhall any one, therefore, conclude, that one of thoſe beings muſt be annihilated, aſſoon as they ceaſe to be united, ſince their union was, in all appearance, ſo unnatural? Let us fancy two bodies abſolutely of the ſame nature; part them, you deſtroy neither; beſides, the exiſtence of the one can never prove the exiſtence of the other, nor the annihilation of the one the deſtruction of the other. Though

they be ſuppoſed alike in all things, their real difference ſuffices to demonſtrate, that they can never be the cauſe of each other's exiſtence or annihilation: becauſe the one is not the other, it may exiſt or be annihilated without the other body. Their difference occaſions their mutual independance. If we muſt reaſon thus of two bodies, which have been parted and are entirely of the ſame nature, with how much more reaſon ought we to argue thus of a ſpirit and a body, whoſe union is no ways natural, their natures being altogether ſo unlike in every circumſtance! On the one hand, the diſcontinuation of an union, ſo accidental to both their natures, can be to neither a cauſe of annihilation; on the other hand, the very annihilation of one of thoſe two beings, would, in no ways, be the reaſon or cauſe why the other ſhould likeways be annihilated. A being, which is no ways the cauſe of the other's exiſtence, cannot be the cauſe of it's deſtruction. It is, therefore, as clear as the day, that the diſ-union of the body and ſoul cannot cauſe the annihilation of either the ſoul or the body; and that even the annihilation of the body doth not contribute any thing towards puting a period to the being of the ſoul.

III.

THE union of the body and ſoul, conſiſting only in a harmony or mutual relation between the thoughts of the one, and the motions of the other; it is eaſy to conceive what the diſcontinuation of that harmony muſt occaſion. The harmony is not natural to thoſe two beings, ſo much unlike, and ſo independent of each other. There could not even be a leſs power than God himſelf, who, by a will altogether arbitrary and almighty, could ſubject two beings ſo widely different in their natures and operations to that harmony for acting together. Suppoſe that almighty and uncontroulable will of God ſuſpended, that forced harmony, if I may call it ſo, is immediately ſuſpended likewiſe; as a ſtone falls with it's own weight, ſoon as the hand that kept it up in the air is removed from it, each of theſe two parts re-aſſumes it's natural independency towards the other. It muſt follow from thence, that the ſoul, far from being annihilated by the breach of that union, which only puts her again into her own natural ſtate, is then free to think independently from all the motions of bodies; in the ſame manner as I am free to walk alone as ſoon as I have

been looſened from another man to whom a ſuperior force did keep me chained. The end of that union is only a diſengagement and a liberty, as the union was but a bond and a mere ſubjection; then ought the ſoul to think independently from all the motions of the bodies, in the ſame manner as the Chriſtian religion ſuppoſes that the angels, who were never united to bodies, do think in heaven. Why ſhould we, therefore, apprehend the annihilating of the ſoul upon that ſeparation, which can produce nothing leſs than an entire liberty of thinking.

IV.

THE body, on the other hand, is not annihilated; the very minuteſt atom doth not periſh. In what we call death, nothing more happens than a ſimple diſplacing of organs; the moſt ſubtle and refined bodies do exhale; the machine is diſſolved and it's harmony deſtroyed. But however the parts of it be ſcattered up and down the world, either by accidents or corruption, none ever ceaſes to have and keep a being; and all philoſophers agree, that not ſo much as the vileſt or moſt imperceptable atom in the univerſe is ever annihilated. To what purpoſe then ſhould any one fear

the annihilation of that other moſt noble and thinking ſubſtance, called ſoul? How can any one imagine, that the body, which is never annihilated, ſhould deſtroy the ſoul more noble than itſelf, a ſtranger to it, and abſolutely independent from it? The diſ-union of thoſe two beings can no more operate the annihilation of the one than of the other. It is readily granted, that no atom of the body doth periſh at the time of the ſeparation of thoſe two parts. What is the reaſon then, that men are ſo buſy in finding out pretences for believing that the ſoul, which is infinitely more perfect, is deſtroyed? It is true, that at any time God is almighty and ſufficient to deſtroy it, if he pleaſes; but there is no reaſon to believe that he wills it rather at the time of it's ſeparation from, than of it's union with, the body. What is called death being only a diſordering of the corpuſcula which compoſe the organs, it cannot be ſaid that this diſorder happens as well in the ſoul as in the body. The ſoul, as it is a thinking being, has none of the bodily properties; it has neither parts, nor figure, nor ſight of the parts in relation to each other, nor motion or change of ſight. So that no kind of diſorder can happen to it. The ſoul, which is the thinking ſelf, and the willing ſelf, is a

ıple being in itſelf, and not diviſible.
ıere is never, in the ſame man, two ſelfs,
: two halfs of the ſame ſelf. The objects
conveyed to the ſoul by divers organs
ich are the different ſenſations; but all
ſe different channels terminate in one on-
centre where they all unite. It is the ſelf
ich is one in ſo ſtrict a ſenſe, that it is
ough that only that each man has a true
ty, and is not ſeveral men. We cannot
of that ſelf, which thinks and wills, that
has different parts joined together, as the
ly compoſed of different limbs joined to-
her. This ſoul has neither figure, ſight,
al motion, nor colour, nor heat, nor hard-
s, nor other ſenſible quality. We neither
, hear, nor feel the ſame; we only con-
ve that it thinks and wills, as it is the na-
e of the body to be extended, diviſible,
l of a particular figure. As ſoon as we ad-
t the real difference betwixt body and ſoul,
muſt, without the leaſt doubt, conclude,
t the ſoul is neither compounded, nor di-
ed, nor figured, nor fitted, becauſe of it's
ts, and conſequently has no diſpoſition of
ans. As for the body, which is organiz-
it may be disjointed, alter it's figure, and
e it's harmony; but the ſoul can never

loſe that order it had not, and which doth not ſuit it's nature.

V.

We might ſay, that as the ſoul was created for no other end than to be united with the body, it is ſo much limited to that ſociety, that it's borrowed exiſtence ceaſes, as ſoon as it's ſociety with the body determines. But this is talking in the air, and without any proof, to ſuppoſe the ſoul was created to exiſt no longer than exactly as ſoon as it ſhould continue united with the body. Whence have any authority to aſſert ſo uncouth a thought? And, what right have they to ſuppoſe this, without producing proofs of it? The body is certainly leſs perfect than the ſoul; ſince it is a greater perfection to think, than not to think: yet we ſee that the exiſtence of bodies doth not determine with the duration of it's ſociety with the ſoul: after death has broke the bones of that union, that body ſtill exiſts, even in it's minuteſt particles. We ſee only two things; the one, that the body is divided and diſmembered: this cannot happen to the ſoul, which is ſimple, without diſpoſition of parts. The other, that the body is no longer moved dependant-

ly from the thoughts of the ſoul: ought we not, therefore, to conclude, that in the ſame manner, and with much more reaſon, the ſoul continues to exiſt on it's part, and that it then begins to think independantly from the operations and motions of the body? The operation follows the exiſtence, as all philoſophers agree. Thoſe two natures are independent from each other, not only as to their natures, but their operations. "As the bo-"dy has no occaſion for the thoughts of the "ſoul, to be moved; the ſoul has no need "of the motions of the body, to think." It was only by chance, that thoſe two unlike beings, and ſo independent, form each other, were ſubjected to operate harmoniouſly. The end of their tranſitory ſociety lets them operate freely, each according to it's proper nature, which has no manner of relation with the other.

VI.

IN ſhort, the queſtion is only to know, whether God, who has it entirely in his choice to annihilate the ſoul of man, or to continue it's exiſtence to eternity, has declared himſelf to will either it's annihilation or preſervation. There is not the leaſt likeli-

hood, or any reaſon, that can induce us to believe, that he would annihilate the ſoul, who doth not annihilate the leaſt atom in the whole univerſe. It is no ways likely that he would annihilate the ſoul at the very moment in which he ſeparates it from the body, ſince it is a being wholly a ſtranger to that body, and independent of it. This ſeparation being no more than the end of it's ſubjection, and to it's acting in concert with the body; it is evident, that this ſeparation is the deliverance of the ſoul, and not it's annihilation. We muſt, however, own, that we ſhould be forced to believe that annihilation, though never ſo extraordinary, and ſo difficult to conceive, had God himſelf revealed it to us in his word. That which depends entirely on his free-will and choice, cannot come to our knowlege but from himſelf. Thoſe, therefore, who will believe the mortality of the ſoul, againſt all probability, ought to make it out to us, that God has ſo expreſly declared it, as to leave no room for doubt. It is no ways incumbent on us to prove, that God will not effect this annihilation. It is enough for us to ſuppoſe, that the ſoul of man, which is the moſt perfect of the beings we know, next to God, ought much leſs to loſe it's exiſtence, than ſo

many other lower beings which ſurround us. Now, the annihilation of the leaſt atom, in the whole univerſe, ſince the creation, is yet unprecedented. Therefore it is ſufficient for us to ſuppoſe, that the ſoul of man is, as well as the leaſt atom, out of all danger of being annihilated. This, of all prejudices and ſuppoſitions is the moſt rational, the moſt certain, and moſt deciſive. It ought to be the taſk of our adverſaries, to rob us of this advantage, by clear and deciſive arguments. They cannot poſſibly prove the contrary, but by a poſitive declaration from God himſelf. When a man, in all probability, ought to think, in favour of his moſt intimate friend, what he, on all occaſions, thinks in favour of the leaſt of mankind, and of thoſe who are the moſt indifferent to him; every body has a right to conclude, that he actually doth think the ſame in favour of that intimate friend; unleſs he expreſly declares the contrary. Beſides, his will, being intirely free, cannot be known but to himſelf. When I can either go out of my room, or ſtay in it; no-body but myſelf can acquaint my ſervants with the free reſolution I have taken thereupon, chuſing either the one or the other. It is evident, therefore, that our adverſaries ought to prove it to us, by ſome expreſs de-

claration of God himſelf, that he has, in a particular manner, excepted the ſoul of man out of his general law, not to annihilate any being, and to preſerve the exiſtence of the leaſt atom. Let them, therefore, either be ſilent hereafter, or produce ſuch a declaration of God for making that exception to his general law.

VII.

We produce the bible, which carries all the tokens of it's author, God, ſince it is that which has taught us to know, and, to the utmoſt of our power, to love the true God. It is in that book that God ſpeaks ſo much like a God, when he ſays, *I am, that I am.* No other book has drawn God in a manner worthy of him. The gods of Homer are a ridicule, and a ſhame to divinity. The book, which we are ſpeaking of, after having ſhown God as he really is, teaches us the only worſhip that is worthy of him. It is not required of us to appeaſe him with victims; but to love him more than ourſelves; to love ourſelves, but for his ſake, and with his pure love. We muſt forſake ourſelves for his ſake, and prefer his will to our own. The love of him muſt work in us all virtues, and ſhut

ıll vices. It is that entire change of man's
t, which man could never have imagined
imſelf. He never would have invented a
gion which robs him even of his own un-
ſtanding and will, and makes him entirely
endent on another. And whenever that
gion is propoſed to him, with the moſt
ɔlute authority, his mind cannot conceive
his will rebels, and all his faculties are ex-
ɛrated. There is no occaſion to wonder
t; ſince it requires no leſs than unhinging
whole man, degrading that dear ſelf,
aking that idol, forming a new man, and
ɔlace God in the room of that ſelf, to make
he ſpring and center of all our affections
l love. As often as man ſhall go about to
me a religion, you may be ſure that he
ıl make it very different. Self-love will
tate it. He will make it, in all reſpects,
t his own purpoſes; whereas this other
ves him nothing; yet is this ſo juſt, that
ɛ very things which make us the moſt a-
rſe to it, ought, moſt of all, to convince us
it's truth. God is all, to whom all is due.
he creature is nothing, to whom nothing
ght to be left; but what is referred to God,
ıd for the ſake of God. All religion which
aches not ſo far, is unworthy God; doth not
ɛw mould man, and carries apparent marks of

falſity. There is on earth but one original which makes religion conſiſt in lovin more than one's ſelf, and to forſake on for God's ſake. All others, that repe great truth, have borrowed it out of thi truth is taught us in this fundamental The book which has thus made known world the whole of God, the nothing man, together with the worſhip of lov have no other author but God. Eithe is no religion at all, or this is the onl one. Moreover, this book is ſo God- it's doctrine, full of prophecies, the ful of which are apparent to the eyes of world, particularly thoſe concerning the doning of the Jews to the hardneſs o hearts, and the calling in of the Gentiles worſhip of the true God, through the M Beſides, this book is authorized by innum miracles done in the face of the ſun, in ent ages, and in the preſence of the g enemies of the Chriſtian religion. In this book has performed all that is foret it. It has changed the very face of the peopled deſarts with Anchorets, who proved angels in mortal bodies. It has the moſt arduous, and yet moſt lovely tues to flouriſh, in the midſt of the mo

rupt and impious ſet of men, and has worked upon man, idolizing himſelf, to reckon himſelf henceforth nothing, and only to love an inviſible Being. Such a book ought to be read, as if it deſcended from heaven upon earth. It is this book wherein God declares a truth, which is ſo probable of itſelf. The ſame God, all-good, and almighty, who alone could deprive us of eternal life, promiſes it to us. It is from the expectation of that everlaſting life, that he taught ſo many martyrs to deſpiſe the ſhort, frail, and miſerable life of their bodies.

VIII.

Is it not natural to conceive, that God, who tries every man in this ſhort life, as to virtue and vice, and often lets the wicked end their courſe in proſperity, whilſt the virtuous live and die in pain and contempt; ſhould delay, to another life, the reward of the latter, and the puniſhment of the firſt? This we are aſſured of in this divine book. O wonderful and comfortable conformity between the oracles of holy ſcripture, and the truth which we carry grafted within ourſelves! Every thing agrees. Philoſophy, the ſupreme authority

of the promiſes, and the inward ſentiment of truth in our own hearts. Whence comes it then, that men are ſo backward, and ſo incredulous about the happy news of their being immortal? The atheiſt tells them, they are without hopes, and that in a few days they are going to be ſwallowed up in the abyſs of nothingneſs for ever. They rejoice at it. They triumph upon their approaching extinction. Thoſe very people, who love themſelves ſo paſſionately, are raviſhed at this doctrine ſo full of horror. They have a reliſh for deſpair. Others tell them, that they have in reſerve an everlaſting life to come; but they are angry with that expectation; they are ſoured at it; and dread to be convinced of it. They uſe all their ſubtilty to evade it's moſt deciſive proofs. They chuſe rather to periſh in delivering themſelves up to their mad pride, and brutal appetites, than to live eternally at the expence of the leaſt conſtraint to embrace a virtuous courſe of life. O monſtrous frenzy! O extravagant ſelf-love! which turns againſt it's own intereſt: O man! become his own enemy, by loving himſelf immoderately.

CHAP. III.

Of the free-will of man.

THIS queſtion will ſoon be decided, if we go about it with the ſame moderation and ſedateneſs, as we examine all the moſt important queries, which are of uſe in human life.

I.

WE do not enquire, whether God could not have created man, without giving him a free-will, and compelling him always to will what is good, as we ſuppoſe in the Chriſtian religion, that the bleſſed in heaven are always neceſſitated to love God? Who is there can doubt but that God was abſolutely maſter to create men at firſt in that ſtate, and to fix them therein for ever.

II.

I OWN, it is not demonſtrable from the nature of our ſouls, nor from the rules of

ſupreme order, that God has not put all mankind in that ſtate of a happy and holy neceſſity. We muſt agree, that nothing but the arbitrary will in God has reſolved to make man a free agent; that is, exempt from all ſort of compulſion or neceſſity, without determining to fix him in ſo happy a neceſſity as always to will what is good.

III.

WHAT decides the queſtion, is the inward conviction of our free-will, which we conſtantly are conſcious of. Our reaſon conſiſts only in the clearneſs of our ideas. We cannot help conſulting them attentively before we conclude that propoſition is true or falſe. It doth not depend from our will to believe, that an affirmative is a negative; that a circle is a triangle; that a vale is a mountain, or that night is day. Whence comes it, that it is utterly impoſſible for us to confound thoſe things? It is becauſe the exerciſe of reaſon ends in conſulting our ideas, and that the idea of a circle is intirely different from that of a triangle, that the notion of a vale ſhuts out that of a mountain, and that of the day is oppoſite to that of the night. Reaſon as much as you pleaſe, I defy you to form

any ſerious doubt about any of your clear ideas: you never judge of any of them, but it is by and from them you judge, and they are the unalterable rule of all your judgments. You miſtake ſometimes for no other reaſon but that you do not conſult them with a ſufficient exactneſs: if you affirmed nothing but what they offer you, or denied nothing but what they clearly exclude, you would never fall into the leaſt error. You would ſuſpend your judgment as ſoon as the idea you examined ſhould not appear ſufficiently clear to you, and you would never ſurrender but to an invincible and irreſtible light. Once more, the whole exerciſe of reaſon is confined to this conſultation of ideas. Thoſe who ſpeculatively reject this rule do not underſtand themſelves, and follow conſtantly in practice, through an unavoidable neceſſity, what in ſpeculation they refuſe to ſubmit to. The fundamental principle of all reaſoning being laid, I maintain, that our free-will is one of thoſe truths of which every man, in his right ſenſes, has ſo clear an idea, that it's evidence is invincible. One may, with the outward lips, and in a paſſion, diſpute and hold an argument againſt this truth in the ſchools, as the Pyrrhoniſts have ridiculouſly diſputed

about the truth of their own exiſtence, that they might have the reputation of doubting of every individual thing; they are a ſect of liars and not of philoſophers. They brag of their doubting, though to doubt be no ways in their power. Every man in his ſenſes, who conſults himſelf, and gives heed to himſelf, carries within himſelf an invincible deciſion, declaring him to be a free agent. This idea doth ſhew us, that a man incurs guilt in no other caſe, but when he doth what he might have choſen not to do; that is, what he doth by the choice of his will, without being determined thereunto, inevitably and invincibly, by ſome other cauſe, diſtinct from his own will. This is a truth, ſaith St. Auſtin, for the explaining of which, there is no occaſion to ſearch deeply for arguments in the writings of philoſophers. It is what nature calls out; it is what is deeply imprinted in our hearts by bountiful nature; it is clearer than the very day; it is what all men know, from the ſchools, where children are taught to read, to the very throne of Solomon; it is what ſhepherds ſing upon the hills, what biſhops teach in the holy places, and what all mankind proclaim all over the world.

Doubts, concerning liberty, can be neither more ſincere nor ſerious than thoſe concern-

ing the exiſtence of the bodies that ſurround us. In a diſputation the imagination grows warm, one impoſes on one's ſelf, one fancies himſelf in a doubt, and thereby confounds, in vain ſophiſms, the moſt palpable truths: but in practice, men ſuppoſe liberty, as they take it for granted that they have arms, legs, a body, and that they are environed with other bodies, againſt which they ought not to run their own with any violence. Reaſon as much as you pleaſe upon your clear ideas, you muſt either follow them without fear of being deceived, or become an abſolute ſceptic. Univerſal doubting is not to be defended, although our cleareſt ideas ſhould be proved to lead us now and then into errors. It is uſeleſs to deliberate whether we ſhall or ſhall not follow them. Their evidence is irreſiſtible; it carries our judgment forcibly along with it; and if they miſlead us, it is becauſe we are under an invincible neceſſity of being miſled. In that caſe we do not deceive ourſelves, it is a power ſuperior to ours that deceives us, and delievers us up to error and deluſion. What can we do then but follow our reaſon? And if even that deceives us, what is it will undeceive us? Have we within ourſelves another reaſon ſuperior to that

our very reaſon, by whoſe aſſiſtance we may miſtruſt her, and ſet her right again? That reaſon can be nothing elſe but our ideas, which we aſk counſel of, and compare together. Can we, by the help of our ideas only, bring in queſtion our very ideas? Are we poſſeſſed of a ſecond reaſon to amend that firſt in us? No, for certain. We may indeed forbear inferring, when thoſe ideas are dark, and when their darkneſs leaves us in ſuſpenſe. But when they are as clear as this propoſition, two and two make four, doubting could not be called an uſe of our reaſon, but a phrenzy. If it be deceitful to follow the dictates of a reaſon, which, by it's evidence, draws us invincibly, it is the infinitely perfect Being who deceives us, and is to be blamed for it. We do our duty when we thus ſuffer ourſelves to be miſled, and we ſhould become guilty if we did reſiſt that ſelf-evidence, which, at laſt, would conquer us, maugre all our vain reſiſtance; and maintain, with St. Auſtin, that the truth of the liberty of the will, and it's daily practice, is ſo inwardly and invincibly evident, that no man awake can doubt of it in his practice.

IV.

LET us proceed to ſome familiar inſtances that will make this truth plain to the ſenſes. Show me a man who ſets up for a profound philoſopher, and denies free-will; I ſhall not give myſelf the trouble to argue with him, but I will try him in the moſt common occurrences of life to make him confound himſelf. I ſuppoſe that this man's wife is unfaithful to his bed; that his ſon diſobeys and ſlights him; his friend betrays him; his ſervant robs him: if he makes any complaints of theſe, I will anſwer him, do not you know that none of all theſe are to blame, and that they were not free to act otherwiſe? They are, in your own opinion, as irreſiſtibly neceſſitated to will what they do will, as a ſtone is forced to fall when it is no longer held up. Do you imagine that our philoſopher will take this for a good excuſe, and will be pacified by it? Can you believe that he will ceaſe to blame the breach of faith of his wife, the inſolence and ingratitude of his ſon, the treachery of his friend, and theft of his ſervant? Is it not certain, that this inconſiſtent philoſopher, who dares deny the liberty of the will to his

ſcholars from the deſk, will ſuppoſe it as indubitable when at home, and that he will be no leſs reconciled to thoſe people, than if, all his life long, he had publicly maintained the doctrine of the greateſt liberty of the will? It is viſible, therefore, that this is no true philoſophy, ſince it gives itſelf the lye without any ſhame. Go on a little farther; tell this man that the world blames him for that action, of which the guilt is laid at his door. To juſtify himſelf, he will anſwer you, that he was not able to avoid it; and he will not queſtion, but that he ſhall be cleared to all the world, if he but proves that he acted not by a free choice, but by unavoidable neceſſity and force. You ſee then that this pretended antagoniſt of free-will is reduced to ſuppoſe it in practice, even when he would be thought not to believe it.

V.

It is true, that there are certain actions, which we are not free to do, and which we neceſſarily avoid. Then we have no manner of motive or reaſon to will, that can ſtrike our underſtanding, put it in ſuſpence, and cauſe us to enter into a ſerious debate to know, if it be expedient to do ſuch an action, or let

it alone. It is thus, that a man, ſound in body and mind, virtuous and guided by religion, is not free to throw himſelf headlong out of a window, to run naked about the ſtreet, and to murder innocent children. In this condition he can have no manner of reaſon to will commit thoſe actions, no room to deliberate with himſelf about it, nor a real indifference of his will in that reſpect. Therefore he is not free to do thoſe actions. There could be nothing but a melancholy madneſs, or a deſpair like to that of ſeveral heathens, which could bring a man to ſuch violent meaſures; but as we feel within ourſelves a true incapacity of committing ſuch wild actions, whilſt we have yet the uſe of our reaſon, we feel, on the contrary, that we are free about all thoſe choices which we ſeriouſly deliberate upon. And indeed nothing could be more ridiculous, than to deliberate if we had it not in our power to chuſe, and if we were always invincibly determined to one only ſide. Yet we often deliberate, and we cannot doubt, but that our deliberations are well-grounded as often as they refer to ſeveral ends, which have all their fair ſide and their motives to draw us into them. We ought, therefore, to believe, that the whole life of man is tranſacted as in the mere illuſion of a dream, in

deliberations which are but childrens play; or we muſt conclude, that we are free in all t common occurrences in which all mankind thinks he deliberates, and even decides at his own pleaſure. It is thus that I determined myſelf to riſe, or to remain ſeated, to ſpeak or be ſilent, to keep back my dinner or to take it without delay. It is in ſuch things, that it is impoſſible for man to bring the exerciſe of his liberty ſeriouſly in queſtion.

VI.

We muſt own beſides, that man is not free either in reſpect to good taken in general, or in reſpect to the *ſummum bonum* clearly known. Liberty conſiſts in a ſort of equilibrium of the will between two different objects. Man cannot chuſe but between objects worthy in themſelves of ſome preference and of ſome love; and which, betwixt them, make a ſort of counterpoize. There is occaſion on each ſide for ſome reaſons true or probable to determine the will; theſe are called motives. Good only, whether truly ſo or only apparent, can excite the will; for evil in the ſhape of evil, without any mixture of good in it, is a nothing entirely deſpoiled of all deſirableneſs. The exerciſe of liberty,

therefore, ought to be grounded on a ſort of over-weight that is between the different good objects propoſed. The underſtanding and the will muſt needs be in a balance between thoſe good objects, whether true or apparent. Now, it is manifeſt, that if you put on the one ſide good, conſidered in a general view, that is, the whole of all good objects without exception; that you can put in the other ſcale but the nothing of all goodneſs; and that the will cannot poſſibly find itſelf in any ſuſpenſe, or ſeriouſly debate what to chuſe, all or nothing. Beſides, if we ſuppoſe the *ſummum bonum* preſent and clearly known, it is impoſſible to oppoſe him any other good that can out-weigh it.

The infinite, without doubt, out-weighs the finite; the diſproportion betwixt them is infinite. The underſtanding can neither doubt, heſitate, nor ſuſpend it's deciſion one moment. The will is forcibly raviſhed and drawn into conſent. Deliberation, in this caſe, would not be a deliberation but a delirium, and a delirium is impoſſible in a ſtate wherein we ſuppoſe ſupreme truth and goodneſs moſt clearly preſent and known as ſuch. It is impoſſible then to heſitate about the *ſummum bonum*, unleſs it be only known with a ſuperficial, imperfect, and confuſed know-

lege, which debaſes it ſo as to make it compared with goods infinitely below it. Then doth the darkneſs of that great object, and the diſtance in which it is beheld, make a ſort of compenſation to the ſmallneſs of the finite object which is preſent and apparent to our ſenſes. In the caſe of this falſe equality man deliberates, chuſes, and exerciſes his liberty between two goods infinitely unequal. But if the ſupreme good ſhould ſhow itſelf at once and evidently, with it's infinite and almighty charm, it would inſtantly raviſh the whole affection of the will, and make all other good diſappear, as broad day-light diſſipates the ſhades of night. It is eaſy to ſee, that moſt of the goods, which offer themſelves to us in the courſe of our lives, are either ſo mean in themſelves, or ſo ſhaded, that they leave us in a condition to compare them together. It is by comparing, that we deliberate to make our choice; and when we do deliberate, we feel in our inward conſcience that we are the maſters of our choice, becauſe the ſight of none of thoſe goods is powerful enough to deſtroy all counterpoiſe, and to draw off our will invincibly. It is in the counterpoiſe of the oppoſite good that liberty is exerciſed.

VII.

TAKE away this liberty, all human life is overturned, and there is not the leaſt trace of order left in ſociety. If men are not free in the good or evil they do, good is no longer good, evil is no longer evil. If an unavoidable and irreſiſtible neceſſity forces us to will all what we will, our will is no more anſwerable for it's willing, than the ſprings of a machine are reſponſible for the motion which was unavoidably and irreſiſtibly placed therein. In that caſe it is ridiculous to accuſe the will, which will not, but as much as another cauſe, different and diſtinct from it, forces it to will. You muſt directly aſcend to that cauſe, as, I accuſe the hand which moves a ſtick to ſtrike me, without blaming the ſtick itſelf, which ſtrikes no farther or no more than the hand moves it. Again, if you take away liberty, you leave on earth neither virtue, vice, or merit. Rewards are ridiculous, and puniſhments unjuſt and hateful. Each man doth but what he ought, ſince he acts neceſſarily. He is not bound to avoid what is unavoidable; nor overcome difficulties that are inſuperable. All things are according to order; for order conſiſts in every thing giving way to fate or

neceſſity. What can be more ſtrange then, than to contradict one's own ideas; that is, the voice of reaſon; and to be obſtinate in the defence of what one is forced to gainſay, every moment in practice; and then to eſtabliſh a doctrine which overthrows all order, all polity, which confounds vice with virtue, authoriſes all monſtrous infamy, deſtroys all ſhame and remorſe, degrades and defaces for ever all human-kind? Whence that deſire to ſtifle thus the voice of reaſon? It is to ſhake off the yoke of religion; it is to produce a flattering inability in behalf of vice, in oppoſition to virtue. Nothing but the moſt unruly pride and paſſions could urge man on to ſo violent an exceſs againſt his own reaſon. But that very extravagance ought to open that man's eyes who gave into it. Ought not man to be miſtruſtful of the corruptions of his heart, and decline to be his own judge, as ſoon as he perceives that the immoderate deſire of evil doth carry him ſo far as to contradict himſelf, and to deny his own liberty, whoſe inward conviction doth, at each moment, overcome him? So enormous and outrageous a doctrine (as Cicero ſtiles that of the Epicureans) ought not to be debated in the ſchools, but puniſhed by the civil magiſtrate.

VIII.

THEY aſk, how the infinitely perfect Being, who always, acording to his nature, tends to the greateſt perfection in his work, can have created free agents, that is, left them to their own choice betwixt good and evil, order, and the overthrow of all order? Why ſhould it be thought that he abandoned them to their own weakneſs, foreſeeing that the uſe they would make of their liberty would end in their own ruin, and the diſordering the whole work of God?

I anſwer, that what they pretend to deny, is unanſwerably true. On the one hand, it is owned, that there is an infinitely perfect Being, who has created man; on the other hand, all nature calls to us that our will is free. Shew me the man who is not aſhamed to deny it, I will force him to own it thirty or more times every day, in all the moſt ſerious occurrences of his life; truth will come from him in ſpite of his reſolution, even when he ſhall be arguing againſt it. It is evident, therefore, that the infinitely perfect Being has created us free agents. The fact, as clear as the day, is deciſive. Men may ſpin the thread of argument very fine, to prove that the in-

finitely perfect Being had it not in his power to give that imperfection to his creature, and place therein that ſpring of all confuſion. The anſwer is ſhort and cutting. The infinitely perfect Being knows much better than we what becomes his infinite perfection. And it is evident, that man, who is his creature is free, and it cannot be denied without contradicting one's own reaſon. Therefore the infinitely perfect Being has found, that the liberty of man was conſiſtent with the infinite perfection of the Creator. It is requiſite therefore, that the finite rational Being ſhould humble itſelf and be ſilent, when the infinitely perfect Being doth, in practice, make out the whole queſtion; without doubt he has not deſtroyed order. It follows then that he has made man free ſince man himſelf cannot ſtifle the cry of his conſcience, proclaiming his liberty; and it follows thence alſo that God could make man a free agent without violating order. The narrow-ſighted man cannot conceive, how that liberty, the ſpring of all diſorder, can agree with that perfect harmony and ſupreme order in the work of God; he ought, with humility, to believe what he doth not understand; it is his very reaſon that keeps him conſtantly in chains by that irreſiſtible im

preſſion of his free-will: although he ſhould not, with his reaſon, comprehend a truth, about which, however, his reaſon admits no doubt, he ought to look on that truth with the ſame eyes as he doth on many others in natural philoſophy, which we can hitherto neither ſet in a true light, nor yet ſeriouſly call into queſtion; as for example, the truth of matter which we can neither ſuppoſe to be compounded of atoms, nor diviſible *ad infinitum*, without inſuperable difficulties.

IX.

THERE is a wide difference betwixt the perfection of the workman and that of the work itſelf. The workman can do nothing but with an infinite perfection, for he can never degrade himſelf, or loſe any thing of his own perfection; but the work of the infinitely perfect workman can never have but a limited perfection. If the work had an infinite perfection, it would become the very workman; for nothing, beſides God himſelf, can be infinitely perfect. Nothing can be equal to him. Nothing can be more than infinitely below him; whence we ought to conclude, that notwithſtanding his omnipotence, he cannot produce any thing out of him but

what muſt be infinitely imperfect, that is, infinitely inferior to his own ſupreme perfection. To conceive what God is able to produce out of himſelf, we muſt behold him as ſeeing infinite degrees of perfection below his own, either by riſing up to him, or by going downwards from him. So that he cannot fix any of his works where it ſhall not have an infinite progreſſion below himſelf. All theſe different degrees are more or leſs exalted in reſpect to each other, but all of them are infinitely inferior to the ſupreme Being. So that men are evidently miſtaken, when they are pleaſed to fancy, that the infinitely perfect Being cannot refuſe to himſelf, for the preſervation of his perfection and his order, giving to his creature the greateſt order and the greateſt perfection, which he is able to give it. On the contrary, it is certain, that God cannot fix any one of his creatures to that certain and determined degree of perfection, but what he might have put it in another ſuperior degree of order and perfection, raiſing it ſtill more towards the infinite perfection, which is himſelf. So that it is beyond diſpute, that God, far from willing always the higheſt degree of order and perfection, can never proceed in raiſing his work to it, but ſtops always at a degree infe-

rior to ſuch others as climb for ever towards the infinite. Why ſhall we wonder then, that God has not made the will of man ſo fully perfect as he might have made it? It is true, that he might, from the beginning, have made it incapable of ſinning, bleſſed, and of the ſame ſtamp with that of the celeſtial ſpirits. But the objection, made before, would ſtill remain in it's full force; ſince there are ſtill above the celeſtial ſpirits, who are limited, infinite degrees of perfection aſcending towards God, in which ſuperior degrees the Creator might have created beings ſuperior to the very angels. We muſt, therefore, agree to one of theſe things; either that God cannot produce any thing out of himſelf, becauſe all he ſhould thus create would be infinitely below himſelf, and conſequently infinitely imperfect: or we muſt, *bona fide*, own, that God, in making of his creature, doth never chuſe the higheſt degree of order and perfection. This one truth is ſufficient to make the whole objection vaniſh. It is true, God had made man more perfect and more partaking of his ſupreme order (that is, more to his own image) in making him at firſt impeccable and bleſſed, than in making him a free agent: but it was not his pleaſure, becauſe his infinite perfection doth indiſpenſibly

oblige him to give always ſuch a de
perfection to his work, but that there
left others above it *ad infinitum*. Eve
gree has an order and a perfection wo
the Creator, though ſuperior degree
both greater. Man, as a free agent, i
in itſelf, conſiſtent with order, and
of God, though man, incapable of ſin,
certainly have been a more perfect cre

X.

THOUGH God made man free, he
abandon him to himſelf; he enlighten
with reaſon. He is himſelf within
inſpire him with virtue; to warn him
leaſt evil he is guilty of; to attract hi
his promiſes; to with-hold and refra
with his threats; to ſoften and mo
with the marks of his love. He pard
rebukes us, waits for us, bears with
peated ingratitude and neglect, he is u
ed in his invitations to the laſt mom
our lives, and our whole life is a co
chain of his favours and grace. I
that if we conceive men without the
to do good, of whom God requires
impoſſible for them to perform, that it
a horror to think God has thus f

them; it is contrary to his order and his goodneſs: but it is not contrary to order, that God ſhould have left it to the choice of man, aſſiſted with his grace, either to make himſelf happy by being virtuous, or unhappy by being a ſlave to vice; ſo that if he be deprived of the heavenly reward, it is becauſe he has thrown it from him when it was in a manner in his own power. In that ſtate man ſuffers no harm but what he doth to himſelf, having it fully in his choice to procure to himſelf the greateſt happineſs.

XI.

WHEN God made man, he imprinted in him a wondrous reſemblance of that divinity of which he bears the image. It is a wonderful power in the dependent and created being, that his dependence doth not take away his liberty, but that he may qualify himſelf as he pleaſes. He makes himſelf either good or bad at his own choice, he turns his will towards good or evil, and he is, like God, maſter of his inward ſentiments and operations; he has even, like God, a mixture of liberty, with reſpect to ſome goods, and of conſtraint and neceſſity to others. In the like manner as God is neceſſitated to love him-

ſelf, and to love nothing but what is good, ſo man cannot love but what has ſome degree of goodneſs; and he loves God neceſſarily aſſoon as he has a full and evident knowlege of him. But, on the other hand, God, infinitely ſuperior to every good thing different from himſelf, finds himſelf, by means of that infinite ſuperiority, entirely free to chuſe which he pleaſes among all thoſe ſubaltern goods; which, though unequal to each other, yet have a ſort of equality amongſt them, in that they all are infinitely inferior to the higheſt good. So that none of them is perfect enough to determine God, and each of them leaves him to his own choice and determination. Man has ſomething of the ſame liberty. None of all the goods which he knows here on earth overcomes his will, none determines him invincibly; all of them leave him to his own determination. He is his own, he deliberates, decides, and has a ſupreme empire over his own will. Certainly there is in that empire, over one's ſelf, a ſurprizing character of likeneſs with the Godhead. That feature of likeneſs is worthy of the complacency of him who owes to himſelf to make all things for his own ſake.

XII.

Is it not worthy of God, that, by making a right uſe of that liberty, he enables man to merit? What is greater for a creature than to merit? Merit is the purchaſe of one's own choice, and which makes man worthy of goods of a higher nature. By merit man raiſes, aggrandiſes, perfects himſelf, and engages God to beſtow on him greater goods proportioned to his merit, called rewards. Is it not beautiful, and according to order, that God would not make man happy, but after he had given him room to deſerve it? That ſucceſſion of degrees by which man riſes, is, without doubt, agreeable to the wiſdom of God, and fit to eſtabliſh his work: it is true, that man cannot merit, without being expoſed to become guilty for not meriting. But it is not to draw man into guilt, that God allows liberty; he beſtows it only to make him capable of meriting; and it is only for the ſake of merit, which is his only end, that he bears with the guilt to which liberty makes man liable. It is againſt God's intention, and contrary to what he propoſes by his aid, that man makes an ill uſe of ſo

excellent a gift, which is ſo well adapted to make him more perfect.

XIII.

GOD, by giving liberty to man, deſigned to manifeſt his goodneſs, magnificence, and his love, in ſuch a manner, however, that if man, contrary to his intention, ſhould make an ill uſe of that liberty, by abandoning order in ſinning, God would make him return into order in another manner by the puniſhment of his ſin. So that all free agents are ſubject to that order, ſome by loving it, and perſevering in that love; others by returning to it in repenting of their treſpaſſes; others by ſuffering a juſt puniſhment for their final impenitence. So that order prevails over all men: it is inviolably preſerved in the guiltleſs, repaired in converted ſinners, and revenged with and by an eternal juſtice, which is itſelf ſupreme order, in the impenitent ſinners. How glorious it is to that wiſdom thus to draw good out of evil itſelf, and to turn evil into good! By permitting evil, God is not the author of it. What is his own in his creature, remains worthy of him; but he ſuffers that his work, which is always infinitely imperfect in itſelf, may leſſen that degree of

goodneſs, which he hath placed therein. He ſuffers it to decay a little, to have the honour of repairing it by grace, or puniſhing it with juſtice; if he neglects or deſpiſes proffered mercies. O how glorious it is to God thus to glorify the two different parts of his order and goodneſs! The one is to reward virtue, the other to puniſh vice. If he had not made man free, he could not have manifeſted either his mercy or his juſtice; he could not have rewarded merit, puniſhed guilt, nor converted the deviating ſinner. He, in a manner, owed himſelf theſe different kinds of glory; he allows them to himſelf without leſſening his goodneſs, of which every man partakes. Shall we wonder that he is obliged to glorify him ſo many different ways, if we give heed to the depth of God's counſel in what relates to the permiſſion of ſin? We cannot find any thing unjuſt towards man, ſince he doth not ſuffer him to go aſtray without giving him, at the ſame time, all the neceſſary helps to prevent it. If we look on that permiſſion, with reſpect to God himſelf, it contains nothing that alters his order and his goodneſs, ſince he only permits what he neither doth himſelf nor incites man to do. To ſin he oppoſes all the helps of reaſon and his grace;

only he doth not employ his omnipotence to hinder man from falling into it, becauſe he will not violate the free-will which he has left to man in favour of merit; and what order loſes by his goodneſs and rewards, it regains it, at the ſame time, by his juſtice and puniſhment of ſin. So that order, which has two eſſential parts, ſubſiſts entire by means of this alternative of mercy and juſtice, to either of which every one is to be ſurrendered.

What ought we, therefore, to conclude upon the three queſtions propoſed?

The infinitely perfect Being has created us for his own ſake, that is, that we may be buſied with admiring, celebrating and loving him. That is his worſhip. The external ſigns of that worſhip are neceſſary to notify it to thoſe who are unacquainted with it; to ſtrengthen and perfect it in thoſe who have already imperfectly embraced it, and to make it uniform in all, ſince all ought to be united in this public adoration.

The ſoul is immortal, ſince it has no cauſe of deſtruction in itſelf; ſince God doth not annihilate any being, no not the leaſt atom, and ſince he expreſly promiſes us an eternal life. The freedom of the will is indiſputable. Thoſe who deny it deſerve no anſwer; they give themſelves the lye. We

muſt either always ſuppoſe it, or give up our reaſon, and ceaſe to live like men. What nature invincibly teaches us is, moreover, certified to us by God's authority ſpeaking in the holy ſcriptures. What keeps us from believing? Whence comes it that man, ſo credulous in every thing that flatters his pride and paſſions, creates ſo many doubts and ſcruples about thoſe truths which ought to fill him with joy and comfort? Man is afraid to find a God infinitely good, who is pleaſed with his love, and expects from him a way of living that makes him happy. He fears leſt his ſoul ſhould not die with his body, and God, after this miſerable and ſhort life, ſhould prepare him a heavenly one without end. He fears to find a God who leaves him maſter of his deſtiny to make him happy upon being virtuous, or unhappy through his guilt, and who chuſes the ſervice of free-agents. Whence doth ſo unnatural a fear proceed, and an unbelief ſo contrary to our greateſt intereſts? It is becauſe ſelf-love is a fooliſh love, an extravagant love, an out-of-the-way love, that betrays itſelf. He is much more afraid to ſtifle his paſſions and vanity a little, during the ſmall time which is allotted him here on earth, than to loſe the higheſt

good, to renounce an eternal life, or to precipitate himſelf in an eternal deſpair. What can we expect from the reaſonings of a mind thus diſtempered, and ſo fearful of admitting proper remedies for its cure? Should we be willing to hearken ſeriouſly to a man, who, in any other matters, ſhould approve himſelf ſo full of prejudices againſt his real advantage? There is but one remedy for all theſe evils, which is, that man re-enter into the bottom of his heart and ſoul, not to poſſeſs himſelf, but to ſuffer himſelf to be poſſeſſed by God; he ought to pray to him, to liſten to his voice, to miſtruſt himſelf, to truſt in him, to condemn his pride; to aſk for ſuccours in his weakneſs, to reſtrain all his paſſions; and to acknowlege that ſelf-love, being the wound and defect of his heart, he cannot meet with health and peace of mind but in the love of God.

LETTER III.

Concerning God and Religion.

SIR,

YOUR letter might very well require for anſwer a treatiſe compoſed by the moſt eminent hand. I ſhall, in obedience to your commands, ſet down here ſome thoughts, to which a man of your capacity will, with little trouble, add what may be wanting.

The reflections of a man, who, within himſelf, examines what he ought to believe concerning religion.

I FIND myſelf in this world without knowing either when I came, or how I came hither, or whither I am going. Some men talk to me of many things, and propoſe them to me as indubitable; but I am reſolved to doubt of them, and even to reject them, un-

leſs, upon examination, I find they deſerve my belief. The true uſe of that reaſon I poſſeſs, is to believe nothing without knowing why I believe it, and without being determined to ſurrender myſelf to it's having certain and ſure ſigns of truth. Some people would have me begin with a contempt of all thoſe things that are called myſteries in religion; but I will be careful how I reject them before I have thoroughly examined them. There is as much levity and folly in being an unbeliever and ſtubborn, as there is in being credulous and ſuperſtitious. I will endeavour to find out a medium. I feel that my reaſon is very weak, and my will very oppoſite to the ſnares of pride and paſſions, to find out that exact medium, and to keep always firm to it when found out. Yet I cannot, by mere natural ſtrength, make myſelf either more penetrating or more patient in my enquiries, more exact in my reaſonings, or more regular in my good diſpoſitions; neither more armed againſt pride, nor more unbyaſſed in favour of truth, than I am already. I am left alone to make this enquiry, and it is of myſelf I am ſincerely miſtruſtful, from vaſt numbers of unhappy experiments I have made from the raſhneſs of judgments, and the corruption of my heart. What is left for

me to do in this weak condition! Oh! if it be true, that there is ſome Being above man, ſome Being more powerful and better than himſelf upon whom he depends; I conjure that Being, through his goodneſs, to aſſiſt me with his power; he ſees my ſincere deſire, how I miſtruſt myſelf and have recourſe to him. Oh! infinitely perfect Being, if it be true, that you exiſt and hear the deſires of my heart, ſhow yourſelf to me, take off the veil that covers your face; ſave me from the danger of not knowing you, of going aſtray far from you, or of loſing myſelf in my vain thoughts, whilſt I am ſeeking you! O ſupreme truth, wiſdom, and goodneſs! If it be true, that you are all that is ſaid of you, and that you have made me for your ſake, ſuffer me not to be my own ſlave, but take into your poſſeſſion the work of your own hands! Open my eyes, and ſhow yourſelf to your creature.

CHAP. I.

Of my THOUGHTS.

I.

THAT which I call Self, is ſomething that thinks, knows, or doth not know; that believes, is ſure, and ſaith, "I ſee with "certainty;" that doubts, miſtakes, perceives it's error, and ſaith, "I was miſtaken." That ſelf is ſomething that wills and wills not, that loves good and hates evil; that is ſenſible of pleaſure and of pain; that hopes, fears, deſires what it has not, and is pleaſed with what it poſſeſſes. That ſelf is often irreſolute, and little agreeing with itſelf; it changes, repents, and then repents again to have repented. That ſelf knows itſelf, and doth govern itſelf: it has a ſort of an empire over itſelf; for I cannot doubt but that I deliberate, in order to chuſe between willing or not willing a thing, as having actually in my power the choice between theſe two oppoſites. When I will, it is becauſe I am pleaſed to form ſuch a will, and

that I chuſe to will whilſt I was maſter of not willing. That ſelf, therefore, is what is called free, that is, maſter of it's own will.

II.

HAS this ſelf always had an exiſtence? where was it? what was I an hundred years ago? Perhaps I then was a body; or, to ſpeak more properly, many ſmall bodies diſperſed here and there in different ſhapes, which motion has gathered together to compoſe therewith that portion of matter over which I have a ſingular command, which commands me in it's turn, and which I call my body. Yet this body, an hundred years ago, did not exiſt thus, compoſed nor figurated as it is this day, with the ſame or the like wonderful organs; then it did not think: that thinking ſelf had then no being. How came it to begin to think? Which way could it become of a not-thinking being, which it was until a certain day, yea, until a certain minute, that ſelf that at once has begun to think, judge, and to will? Has it made itſelf, has it conferred on itſelf thought, which it had not; and ſhould it not have poſſeſſed it to be able to give it to itſelf, or elſe take it from the nothingneſs? Can the nothing-

neſs of thought give itſelf that degree of exiſtence which it wants itſelf, and has not to give? Which way then is that thought, that will, and that liberty come to my ſhare, which I had not before? and where muſt I look for the ſource thereof?

III.

SHALL I believe, that the ſame body is ſometimes capable of knowing, judging, willing, being free; and ſometimes of not having either knowlege, judgment, will, or liberty? Let us examine this point a little. I ſuppoſe a body reduced into the moſt ſubtle duſt; if this duſt was to be ſubtilized *ad infinitum*, I cannot conceive how the ſmall bodies would be more capable of thought than the great ones. Suppoſe ſome corpuſcula round, and ſome ſquare, it appears to me that the round and the ſquare ones are equally incapable of knowing each other, or of willing. The globules have no more reaſon than the triangles. The hooked atoms have neither more wit or underſtanding than the atoms without hooks. An hundred thouſand atoms, when linked together, have no more thought, than each of them when ſingle and ſeparated from the reſt. The liquid bodies

ave no more thought in their fluidity than he dry bodies in their conſiſtence. The moſt apid river has neither more will, nor a better nderſtanding than a ſtone. The moſt impe- uous motion doth no more give underſtand- ng to a heap of matter than reſt doth. Take a piece of matter, reduce it into the moſt ſub- le powder, boil it up, make it evaporate a- gain in the ſhape of volatile bodies, or elſe let the ſame undergo all the different kinds of fermentations known to the chymiſts; pro- duce out of it the moſt rapid whirlwind, or cauſe it to move in any manner you think fit, you ſhall never conceive that this maſs, thus faſhioned, ſubtilized, and moved with rapi- lity, doth know itſelf, or can arrive at ſay- ng to itſelf, I believe, I doubt, I will or will not. Durſt you ſay, that there is a legree of fermentation, and one diſtinct mo- nent wherein this maſs has neither underſtand- ng nor will; but that there is yet occaſi- on for one laſt degree of fermentation, and that at the very ſubſequent moment this maſs will begin, all on a ſudden, to judge, to will, to ſay in itſelf, I believe and I will. How comes it that children, who are taught by nature only, and in whom reaſon is not yet altered by any prejudice, fall a-laughing, when they are told, that a watch, which they hear

move, has much wit? It is becauſe reaſon doth not permit to believe, that bare matter, whatſoever figure or motion you allow it, ſhould ever think, judge, or will. How comes it, that ſo many people are ſhocked, when they are told, that the brutes are nothing but machines. Is it not becauſe theſe men cannot apprehend that a mere machine is capable of that knowlege which they ſuppoſe in brutes? So true it is, that reaſon has an averſion to believe matter capable of thought, though it be ſubtilized, figurated, and moved to the utmoſt of our conceptions.

IV.

But let us ſuppoſe any thing: let us drive invention even to impoſſibility; let us grant, that the ſame body, which was a not-thinking one in the firſt minute, becomes, all on a ſudden, a thinking, judging, willing one, and ſaying, in the very ſecond minute, I will; our difficulty is not a bit removed. If thought be but a degree of being, which bodies can acquire and loſe, we muſt at leaſt own it to be the higheſt degree of exiſtence that bodies can acquire, and that this perfection is much ſuperior to that of being extended and figurated. To know itſelf, and other beings, to

dge, will, be free; that is, without doubt, degree of exiſtence without compariſon, preable to that of being a maſs, which knows ither itſelf nor others, and is incapable of dging, willing, or chuſing. Therefore I k again, who is it that has, at once, with- one particular minute, given to a heap of atter that ſublime degree of exiſtence it had t in the very minute before? That heap uld not beſtow on itſelf this ſo excellent de- ee which it wanted, and of which we may y it had the nothingneſs or privation in itlf; it could not receive it from other bodies; r other bodies, no more than this, cannot ive what they have not. The whole corporeal nature jointly, ſuppoſing it intirely rporeal and not thinking, cannot give, eier to itſelf in general, or to any of it's parts, at ſuperior degree of exiſtence, which is alled thinking, and is not a dependent on e exiſtence of bodies. Beſides, no thinkg being whatever can give or communicate hought, or the faculty of thinking, to any ther being different from itſelf. Bodies may e to each other the occaſion of motion, acording to the rules eſtabliſhed by a power uperior to them all; but no limited being an give to another that degree of exiſtence r perfection which it has not.

The privation of one degree of exiſtence is nothingneſs of that very degree. To give the degree of exiſtence to one that has it not, there is occaſion in a manner to work upon nothingneſs itſelf, and to cauſe a ſort of real creation in it, in order to add to that inferior being already exiſting, a new degree of exiſtence that raiſes it above itſelf. As to make that exiſt which had no manner of exiſtence before, is, in effect, creating the whole being; ſo to make a certain degree of exiſtence to exiſt in a peculiar body that had nothing of it, is, in effect, creating it in part. And it is evident, that the thinking beings, which we know, are too weak, and too imperfect, to have the power to create, in others, a very high degree of exiſtence and perfection, which in them had no exiſtence. The action of creation belongs to, and requires, an infinite power and perfection. There is an infinite diſtance betwixt the non-exiſtence of a thing and it's exiſtence. It requires, therefore, an infinite power to make that thing paſs from non-exiſtence to exiſtence. Beſides, one ſhould have a perfection in it's higheſt degree, to be capable of becoming the ſource thereof, to ſupply others with it, and to communicate it to what is the mere nothingneſs and privation of it. To have in one's ſelf that fecun-

dity, and to effect without the communication of that being, it is neceſſary to have the fulneſs thereof in one's ſelf, through one's ſelf, in property and in ſtore. Now, to poſſeſs exiſtence through one's ſelf, is the higheſt perfection. I therefore ſeriouſly bethink myſelf, and acknowlege, that the thinking beings, which are like myſelf, are abſolutely incapable of that fecundity, and of that creation of thought out of themſelves, in ſubjects that have no manner of beginning for it. Thinking beings, that do miſtake, are ignorant, delight in evil, hate virtue, often contradict each other, and are oftener contrary to themſelves, cannot have that higheſt perfection of ſelf-exiſtence; they cannot be thinking to that degree as to be creators of thought in others.

V.

IT follows then, that this ſelf, which was not a thinking being an hundred years ago, is become thinking through the goodneſs of a ſuperior Being, which, having thought of itſelf and fully, could make it come over into me, who was the privation or nothingneſs thereof. It follows, that he poſſeſſed thought in himſelf in that fulneſs and perfection, that

he had power to beſtow it on ſuch as had it not. It follows, that he could make me ſtep from the privation of thought to a thought exiſtent. It follows, that he is a creator in me, at leaſt, of that degree of exiſtence of which I was the mere privation, when I was but a ſmall parcel of matter. So that my concluſion is abſolutely independent from the queſtion that is debated, "Whether my ſoul "be diſtinct from my body?" Without entering into that debate, I find all I want to arrive at my only end. If ſouls are diſtinct from the bodies, I aſk, who is it that has united my body and my ſoul? who has joined two ſuch different natures? They have not formed a partnerſhip by any compact freely agreed upon among themſelves. The body is not capable thereof. The ſoul doth not remember to have made any ſuch bargain; it would certainly have retained ſome remembrance of it, if it had done it out of it's free choice. Beſides, if the ſoul had done it freely, it might at pleaſure break the agreement whereas we ſee it cannot put an end to it without deſtroying the organs of the body. On the other hand, the other being like unto me, far from having eſtabliſhed in me the union or mutual ſociety, are in the ſame caſe and, as well as myſelf, look for a ſuperior

cauſe of it. Laſtly, whence proceeds a difference which I experience between that parcel of matter, which I call my body, and all other neighbouring bodies? Though I am never ſo willing that other bodies ſhould move, they ſtand ſtill for all my wiſhes; my will, when alone, has not even the power of ſtirring the leaſt atom; but as to the heap of my own body, as ſoon as my will commands, that heap immediately obeys. I will, and inſtantly all my limbs turn which way I pleaſe. Who has given me that abſolute power over them, whilſt I am ſo impotent in reſpect to all other bodies which ſurround me? If, on the contrary, my ſoul is nothing elſe but my body become thinking, I aſk, who it is, that has created, in my body, that degree of exiſtence, I mean thought, which was not there before?

CHAP. II.

Of my own BODY, *and of all other bodies in the univerſe.*

I.

THERE is a portion of matter which I call my body, becauſe it's motions depend entirely from my will, whereas no other body depends upon it. That portion of matter ſeems to me framed on purpoſe to perform all the functions in which it is employed. I ſee a body made with artful ſymmetry; it is placed on two thighs and two legs, of equal ſize and well proportioned. Have I a mind to remain ſtanding and unmoved, my thighs and legs are ſtraight and firm like pillars which ſuſtain the whole edifice. On the contrary, have I a mind to walk, thoſe two great Coloſſuſes are ready divided by articulations and joints; whilſt the one remains ſteady to ſuſtain me, the other advances to carry me towards the objects to which I have a mind to be nearer; but that body, at the ſame time it inclines, knows how to faſten it-

ſelf, ſo that it preſerves a perfect equilibrium to prevent it's falling. The body, proportioned to theſe two ſupporters, is ſtrengthened by ribs well diſpoſed in ſemicircles which join together before; they all come from the back-bone, which is made up of vertibres, which are ſmall but very hard bones, inſerted into each other, ſo that the back is at the ſame time very ſtraight and very firm when I think fit, and very flexible to bow itſelf downwards or ſideways aſſoon as I find occaſion. The office of the ribs is to ſhut in and preſerve in ſafety the principal organs, which are, in a manner, the center of life, and are extremely tender; yet they leave betwixt each of them an openneſs, exactly at the place I want it, to facilitate the expanſion or contraction of all thoſe inward parts, either for breathing or other vital operations. My heart is like the ſpring, whence flows, with impetuouſneſs, the blood, which goeth through innumerable conduits to moiſten and nouriſh the muſcles of all the members, juſt as rivers do water the fields to make them fruitful. That blood, which grows ſlower in it's courſe, returns from all the extremities of the body to the center, to re-kindle it's flame and reſume new ſpirits. The lungs are like bellows promoting inſpiration. The ſtomach is a ſtore-

room which receives all aliments; it contains juices proper for their diſſolution, and for their converſion into a ſort of milk, which ſoon after becomes blood. The lung-pipe, when well formed, is the moſt perfect of all muſical inſtruments. All is marvellous in the body of man, even the inſtruments of thoſe meaneſt and loweſt functions which decency forbids to name. There is in this whole body never an inward ſpring but what ſurpaſſes all the induſtry of the mechaniſts. On the upper part of this body hang down two arms, divided in ſeveral joints, ſo that they move all manner of ways; at the end of them are two hands, which are lengthened and folded by means of the joints of the fingers armed with nails. What could poſſibly be found out fitter than they to lay hold, to repulſe, to carry, to draw, to ſeparate bodies linked together, to unravel things that are entangled, to compoſe either the coarſeſt or the fineſt works of all ſorts of materials?

Still higher, the neck is raiſed, which holds itſelf upright or bends down, turns to the right or the left according to occaſion, and carries the head, the principal ſeat of all ſenſation. The back-part of the head is covered with hair, which either adorn or ſtrengthen it. The fore-part is the face, where two e-

ral eyes, and uniformly placed, ſeem to be azing with a celeſtial flame. The noſe is ot only the organ of ſmelling, but likewiſe lorns the face by it's protuberance. The wo ears are ſeated on each ſide to facilitate earing from the right or the left. Thoſe rgans of feeling are double, not only to ake their operation readier and eaſier on oth ſides, but to be at hand in caſe ſome accident ſhould happen to either. The mouth, n account of the lips, is a great ornament o the face: when it opens it ſhows a double ow of teeth deſigned to break the aliments, nd to prepare them for eaſier digeſtion. The oluble and moiſt tongue ſtrikes the palate nd teeth in ſo many different ways, that it rticulates a ſufficient number of ſounds thereof to compoſe all the languages of the univerſe. But I dare not undertake to deſcribe all that is wonderful in the ſtructure of my body, I only hint at the general heads; it would be endleſs; the more we ſearch, and the more we diſcover, we find every part of it far ſurpaſſing all the art of the moſt ſkilful men. The body of man is the moſt compound, and the moſt induſtrious piece of machinery.

II.

If, from my own body, I proceed to other bodies that ſurround me, I do not only perceive a great many bodies like my own, but, beſides, I ſee every-where animals made after different patterns. Some walk on four feet, others have wings to fly in the air, and others have fins to ſwim in the waters. The ſhips which men build with ſo much art, according to ſuch exact and difficult rules, are only copies made after them; birds and fiſhes, which ſway in the two liquid elements, whereof the one is ſomewhat thicker than the other. Of theſe animals, ſome are ſubſervient to us in carrying of burdens, as the camels; others ſupply with their ſtrength what we are not able to perform with our own, as the oxen; which afterwards ſerve us for food: the ſheep firſt nouriſh us with their milk, and then clothe us with their wool. Man has acquired the art of ruling all theſe, either with his ſtrength or induſtry, and makes them all ſubſervient to his occaſions. A worm, an ant, a gnat, ſhew an hundred times more induſtry than the moſt complete watch of the beſt artificer. The earth, that ſuſtains us, drawn

out

it of it's fruitful boſom all we want for our od, every thing iſſues out of it, and re-ters into it, to be born again every year; never is wore quite away. The more you ar up it's bowels, the more it fills you with s beauties to reward your labour. It is co-red with plentiful crops, adorned with eens, and together with man feeds the aſts that are ſubſervient to man, and after-ards food for him. The trees which it pro-ices are great garlands planted in it's boſom r it's ornament, in the ſame manner as ir adorns the heads of men. Theſe trees, the ſummer, refreſh us with their ſhade, d their wood warms us in the winter. Their uit, ſuſpended from their boughs, falls into r hands as ſoon as ripe. The plants have infinite variety, all of them have an order at renders them uniform to a certain de-ee, but beyond that, each of them is dif-ent, and there are not two leaves upon a e in all points alike. The bloſſoms, which autify all nature, are the promiſing pledges fruits, and the fruits, which crown the year, ead plenty juſt before that ſeaſon, whoſe our hinders men from labour. The ri-lets fall down from the mountains. The ers, after having watered different coun-

tries, and made trade eaſy to their inhabitants, fall into the ſea, which, far from depriving men of each others ſociety, is, on the contrary, the center of commerce between the moſt diſtant nations. The winds, which purify the air, and temperate the ſeaſons, are the ſoul of navigation and of trade between the ſeveral nations. If the air was but a little thicker we could not breathe therein, it would be to us like a ſea wherein we could not avoid being drowned. Who is it that has been able to give it ſo adequate a degree of thinneſs and fineneſs?

The ſun riſes and ſets to give us the day and the night. Whilſt it leaves us in the quiet of darkneſs, it is gone to enlighten another part of the globe oppoſite to ours. The earth is a globe ſuſpended in the air, and this great luminary turns round about it, becauſe it owes it it's rays, and is not only regular in it's rounds, which form night and day, but alſo in it's gradations to and from the poles, which is the efficient cauſe of ſummer and winter by turns, for each half of the hemiſphere. If the ſun came but a little nearer to us we ſhould be ſcorched; if it receded but a little farther from us, we ſhould be frozen, and our vital heat would be extinguiſhed. Who is it that conducts and guides with ſo

much evenneſs that flambeau of the univerſe, that ſubtle and rapid flame?

The moon, nearer to our earth, borrows from the ſun a ſoft light that tempers the darkneſs of the night, and lights us when we cannot enjoy the light of the day, or wait for it's return. Obſerve how many conveniences there are to render the life of man eaſier!

But what do I ſee! a prodigious number of glittering and ſhining conſtellations in the firmament like ſo many ſuns! At what a diſtance are they from us! How prodigious and immenſe is their ſize that confounds our imagination, and ſtartles our very ſoul! What do we ſeem to ourſelves! Deſpicable atoms, ſeated we know not in what corner of the univerſe, when we behold theſe innumerable ſuns. An almighty hand has ſown them profuſely, to make us aſtoniſhed at a magnificence which coſts him nothing.

III.

IF I go into a houſe, I there find foundations laid of very hard ſtone to make the ſuperſtructure durable; I ſee walls raiſed high, with a top-covering which hinders the rain from falling into it: I obſerve in the middle

an empty place, which is called a yard, and which is the center of the whole; I meet with a ſtair-caſe, whoſe ſteps are viſibly made to aſcend by; apartments ſeparated from each other for the convenience of thoſe that inhabit this houſe; rooms with doors to enter by; locks and keys to open and ſhut them; windows to let the light in, without admitting the wind at the ſame time; a chimney to make fires in, without being diſturbed by the ſmoke; a bed to reſt in, chairs to ſit down on, a table to eat, and a deſk to write upon.

At the ſight of all theſe conveniencies, managed with ſo much art, I cannot doubt but that it is the handy-work of men. I can never think they are atoms which chance has thus ranged together. It is no ways poſſible for me ſeriouſly to believe, that the ſtones of this building have raiſed themſelves upon each other with ſo much order, as the poets repreſent us the walls of antient Thebes, raiſed by the harmonious lyre of Amphion.

Never will any man in his ſenſes affirm, that this houſe, with all it's furniture, made and furniſhed itſelf. The order, proportion, ſymmetry, the manifeſt deſign of the whole, forbid us to aſcribe this to a blind cauſe, ſuch as is chance. It will be in vain for any man to tell me, that this houſe made itſelf by mere

chance, and that men, who found all thoſe things thus diſpoſed by mere chance, make uſe of them, and only fancy that they were made for their uſe and on their account. Such thoughts cannot enter into the minds of rational men. It is juſt ſo with Homer's Iliad; or a watch found in a deſart iſland; no-body could ever imagine that admirable poem, or that artful watch were the effect of mere chance; it would immediately be concluded, that it was ſome ſublime poet who had compoſed thoſe fine lines, and that a ſkilful maſter had made that watch. Thoſe are ſufficient premiſſes to form our concluſion upon. The work of the whole univerſe has an hundred times more art, order, wiſdom, ſymmetry, and proportion, than all the moſt artful productions of the moſt ſkilful men. It is therefore a blind obſtinacy to refuſe acknowleging the almighty hand which has formed the univerſe.

CHAP. III.

Of the power which has formed my body, and made me a thinking being.

I ACKNOWLEGE, therefore, that undoubtedly it was an all-wiſe and almighty power which ordered the univerſe, and ſhaped that peculiar body which I call my own. I own that the ſame ſupreme power did, without doubt, add within me, to that body a thinking being diſtinct from that body; or that he has given to that body the faculty of thinking, which it had not, and that from not thinking, as it was naturally, he has made it thinking, in the manner I now ſee it. If that power has linked together thoſe two natures, which we call body and ſoul, and are ſo unlike, it follows, that this power muſt be ſuperior to both thoſe natures; he ought to have an equal and ſupreme authority over both; he muſt contain within himſelf the whole perfection of each of them; he ought to be capable to ſubject them by his mere will to that mutual harmony betwixt the motions of the body and the thoughts of the ſoul; that ſupreme Being ought to be ſo much maſter

of bodies, as to be able to give to a ſpirit ſuch a power over any other body as we commonly aſcribe to God. My will, which of itſelf has no power over any other body, ſo as to force it to act, needs only to will; and that body, which I call my own, immediately obeys it's command: you would think that it knows and hears the order of my will, it pays obedience to it much in the ſame manner as we ſay all beings do obey the voice of God. What ſupreme power is this that is given to my mind over my body! How powerful and perfect muſt he be, who gives to a being ſo limited and impotent, ſo much power over another being ſo widely different from itſelf? He certainly carries in himſelf the univerſality of beings; that is, the univerſal perfection of all kinds; he moſt eminently unites in himſelf the whole real perfection of ſpirits and bodies, and has the ſupreme empire over thoſe different natures, even to a capacity of communicating this power to one of theſe natures over the other, in order to form that union which compoſes man.

If, on the contrary, that power has not placed in me a double nature, but has only been the cauſe, that my body, which did not think, has, at a certain point of time, begun to think, it follows, that this power has created

in me that new degree of exiſtence; it muſt be that this power, by it's infinite fecundity, has made that being, which I call myſelf, paſs from the privation, or nothingneſs of thought, to the exiſtence of thought, which is now my own.

Which is then that voice that calls out of nothing a very exalted degree of exiſtence, which was not in me before, and makes it exiſt in me? that creation of thought in an inanimate, blind, and inſenſible maſs, is, without doubt, a work of the Almighty. See there a Creator: if he is not ſuch as to my firſt degree of exiſtence, which is to be a heap of matter, he is at leaſt the Creator of the ſecond degree of exiſtence, in me, which is far ſuperior, *viz.* that of a thinking being. But how can we conceive him to be the Creator of the ſuperior degree of exiſtence if he was not ſuch of the inferior? How could a vile and inanimate maſs receive from him ſo high a degree of perfection, if it was not dependent on him? Beſides, how is it probable, that the moſt perfect degree of exiſtence, *viz.* that of thinking, judging, and willing freely, ſhould be dependent on him; ſo that he can create and give it when he pleaſes, to the meaneſt beings that are deprived of it; and yet that the loweſt degree

of exiſtence, *viz*, being a mean and inanimate maſs of matter, ſhould exiſt of itſelf and be independent of that power? If it was ſo, we could not avoid ſaying, that the loweſt degree of exiſtence poſſeſſes the higheſt perfection; which is, to exiſt of itſelf, to be independent; in a word, to be uncreated; and that the higheſt degree of exiſtence has the greateſt imperfection; to wit, that of being dependent, not to exiſt of itſelf; to have but a borrowed exiſtence; in a word, to be only a created being.

It is apparent, therefore, that the power which re-unites in itſelf all thoſe different degrees of exiſtence, and creates them in me by his own good pleaſure, cannot be otherwiſe than infinitely perfect. It muſt neceſſarily exiſt of itſelf, ſince it cauſes every thing to exiſt that is diſtinct from itſelf. We muſt own that carries in itſelf the fulneſs of being, ſince it poſſeſſes it to ſuch a degree as to communicate it to nothingneſs. It muſt have the univerſality of exiſtence, ſince it has an equal empire over all natures, and all the different degrees of perfection: in ſhort, it muſt be equally wiſe and powerful, ſince it frames, beautifies, and conducts the univerſe with ſuch an art and order, as is viſible even from

the leaſt inſects to the very ſtars, and man himſelf, who, having the faculty of thinking, is a more excellent being than all the reſt together.

CHAP. IV.

Of the worſhip due to that power.

I.

IT follows then, that this firſt Being, which I acknowlege as the fertile ſpring of all others, has drawn and made me out of nothing. I was nothing, and it is through him alone I have begun to be all what I am. It is in him that I have being, motion, and life. He has taken me out of nothing to make me whatever I am; he ſtill upholds me every moment with his hand, and ſuſpended in the air over the abyſs of nothingneſs, wherein my own weight would make me relapſe, if he left me to myſelf; and he continues exiſtence to me, which was not natural to me, and to which he inceſſantly raiſes me, notwithſtanding my frailty, through a bounty which has occaſion to be repeated every

moment of my duration. I am then but a borrowed being, but half a being, but a being that is continually betwixt exiſtence and nothingneſs, but a ſhadow of the immutable Being. That Being is all and I am nothing, at leaſt I am but a weak thing derived from his plenitude without bounds. I have not only received at his hand certain gifts: that which has received the firſt of his gifts is nothingneſs; for there was nothing in me, preexiſtent to all his gifts, and capable of receiving them. The firſt of his gifts, that has been the foundation of all the reſt, is what I call myſelf. He has given me that ſelf; I owe him not only all what I have, but beſides, all what I am. O incomprehenſible gift! which is ſoon named in our inſignificant language, but what the underſtanding of man will never rightly apprehend the depths of! That God, who has made me, has given me myſelf to myſelf; that ſelf, I love ſo much, is no leſs than a preſent from his bounty: that God ought, therefore, to be within me, and I in him, if I may ſpeak thus, ſince it is of him I received this ſelf. Without him I had not been this ſelf; without him I ſhould not have that ſelf to be an object of my love, nor the love with which I love that ſelf, nor the will that loves it, nor the thought by which I

know myſelf. The whole is a gift; he who receives the gift, is himſelf the firſt gift received. "O God! thou art my true Father: "it is thou who haſt given me my body, my "ſoul, my extenſion, and my thought: it was "thou that bideſt me be, and inſtantly I be-"gan to be, when I was not before. It is "thou that haſt loved me, not becauſe I "exiſted already, and did already deſerve "thy love, but on the contrary, that I might "begin to exiſt, and that thy previous love "might make ſomething lovely of me: it is "my nothingneſs, therefore, that thou didſt "love from all eternity, to give it a being, "and make it worthy of thee."

II.

"O God! I owe thee all, ſince I received "all from thee, and owe thee even this ſelf, "which has received ſo much from thy "bounteous hands! I owe thee all, o infi-"nite goodneſs! But what ſhall I return "thee? Thou haſt no occaſion for any "thing I have, ſince all came from thee. "Far from hoarding up for thyſelf, thou haſt "heaped thy bleſſings on me. Even when "they are in my hands, they are rather thine "than mine, ſince I have myſelf no exiſtence

" but in thee. I have them only upon truſt,
" but thou poſſeſſeſt them as thy own. Thou
" canſt not intirely diveſt thyſelf of them, ſo
" eſſential it is that all good ſhould remain in
" thee. What then ſhall I give thee? There
" remains nothing in my power to offer thee
" but myſelf; but what I call myſelf is no leſs
" thine than all the reſt. Once more, what ſhall
" I pretend to give thee, who have received
" all at thy hands? O eternal love! Thou
" requireſt but one thing of me, which is
" the free-will of my heart. Thou haſt left it
" free to me, that I might like and chuſe freely
" that immutable ſubordination which ought
" for ever to retain my heart in thy power:
" thou only willeſt that I ſhould agree to that
" order, which conſtitutes the happineſs of
" all the creation: but that I may do ſo,
" thou ſheweſt me outwardly all the charms
" thereof, to make it appear lovely to me;
" and beſides, thou entereſt with the ſtrong
" allurements of thy grace within my heart,
" to move it's ſprings, and to make me love
" what ſo well deſerves it. So that thou art
" at the ſame time the object and the author
" of my love, at the ſame time the loving,
" and the well-beloved. Thou loveſt thy-
" ſelf in me, and how is it poſſible that thy
" vile and corrupt creature could worthily

" love thee, if thou didſt not take care to
" love thyſelf in him ?

" The incenſe of men, is, with reſpect to
" thee, but a deſpicable ſmoke, thou needeſt
" not either the fat or the blood of their ſa-
" crifices; their ceremonies are but a vain
" ſpectacle, their richeſt offerings are too
" poor for thee, and more thy own than
" theirs: their very praiſes are but a lying
" ſpeech, unleſs they adore thee in ſpirit and
" in truth. No ſervice can be acceptable to
" thee but what is love. External ſigns are
" good when proceeding from the heart; but
" the eſſential worſhip of thee is nothing but
" love, and thy kingdom is entirely within
" thyſelf; it would be a groſs miſtake to
" ſearch for it out of thee. O love ! to love
" thee is all in all; the whole of man; all
" beſides it is not he, it is only his ſhadow.
" Whoever doth not love thee is a ſtranger
" to his own nature, he has not yet begun
" to live."

III.

But ought this worſhip of love to be thus lodged and confined in my heart, as never to let me give any outward ſigns of it ? No! If I truly love, it will be impoſſible to conceal

my love. Love wants to be active, and influence others to love. Can I ſuffer other men, whom God has made for his own ſake, as well as myſelf, to be ignorant of their condition!

God is ſo great a Being, that he owes all to himſelf. The inſolent folly of man, that deſpicable creature, is to think of nothing but what he calls himſelf: it is this idol of his heart, which is the object of God's reſentment and jealouſy. Nothing is more unjuſt than only to conſider myſelf for no other reaſon but that it is myſelf. This is no valuable reaſon, it is no more than an impetuous torrent of ſelf-love; on the contrary, God's ſupreme juſtice ought to conſiſt in not loving any thing but in proportion to that degree of goodneſs which renders it lovely. He meets in himſelf innate goodneſs, and perfection, conſequently he owes himſelf wholly to himſelf in the moſt ſtrict juſtice. On the other hand, he finds in all of us but a limited and mixed goodneſs, impaired by that mixture. The goodneſs he finds in us is no more than what himſelf placed there, and he can delight in nothing but his moſt gracious bounty: he finds in us nought beſides nothingneſs, evil, and his own gifts; he can, therefore, in ſtrict juſtice, be no ways be-

holden to us. He can love in us but his own goodneſs, which ſurpaſſes our nothingneſs and malice: he cannot, therefore, remit any thing of his rights, he would violate his own order, and ceaſe to be what he is, if he did not do himſelf that ſtrict juſtice. He could not, therefore, create men with an underſtanding and a will, but with a deſign that that their whole lives ſhould be employed in celebrating his ſupreme truth, and loving his infinite goodneſs. Such is the principal end of our creation.

IV.

He has placed men together in a ſociety, wherein they are bound to love and mutually help each other, like children of the ſame family, who acknowlege one common father. Every nation is but a branch of that numerous family, which is ſcattered over the face of the whole earth. The love of that common father ought to be apparent, manifeſt, and inviolably reigning in this whole ſociety of well-beloved children. Each of them never ought to fail ſaying, to thoſe that are born from him, "know the Lord, who is your "Father." Thoſe children of God ought to proclaim his kindneſs, ſing his praiſes, no-

tify it to ſuch as are ignorant of it, and remind thoſe of it who forget it. They were placed on earth for no other end than to know his perfection, accompliſh his will, and to communicate to each other that knowlege and celeſtial love. What would it ſignify, if that family kept up ſociety, and agreed in every thing elſe but in the worſhip of ſo good a parent? It is requiſite, therefore, there ſhould be a ſociety amongſt them for the worſhipping of God; and it is this which is called religion; the meaning of which is, that all men ought to inſtruct, edify, and love each other, in order to love and worſhip their common father. "The ground "and eſſential part of religion doth not con- "ſiſt in any outward ceremony, but entirely "in the underſtanding of truth, and the love "of the ſovereign good;" but thoſe inward ſentiments cannot be ſincere, without being in a manner put in a co-partnerſhip amongſt men by ſome determined and apparent ſigns. It is not ſufficient to know God, we muſt make it appear that we know him, and ſo conduct ourſelves that none of our brethren may either remain ignorant of him, or forget him. Thoſe apparent ſigns of worſhip are commonly called religious ceremonies. Thoſe ceremonies are no more than tokens,

by which men have agreed to edify each other, and to awake in each other the remembrance of that worſhip which is in their hearts. Beſides, weak and fickle men have often occaſion for thoſe viſible tokens, to put themſelves in mind of the preſence of that inviſible God, whom they are bound to love. Thoſe tokens have been inſtituted with a certain degree of majeſty, the better to repreſent the grandeur of that heavenly Father. Moſt men, incapable of fixing the volatility of their imagination, and hurried away by their paſſions, have great occaſion, that the pomp of thoſe ſigns, inſtituted for the common worſhip of God, ſhould ſtrike and fetter their imagination, that thereby all their paſſions may become calmer, and be ſuſpended for a while. It is properly this, that is called religion, ſacred rites, and the public worſhip of that God who has created us. Human kind cannot acknowlege and love his Creator, without ſhewing he loves him, without deſiring to make him beloved, without expreſſing that love, with that magnificence proportioned to the Being he loves; or laſtly, without inciting himſelf to love, by the very tokens of his love. This is that religion which is inſeparable from the belief of the Creator.

CHAP. V.

Of the religion of the Jews, and of the Meſſias.

SINCE the firſt Being, who has created me, has made all things for his own ſake, and requires, of intelligent creatures, a worſhip of love, publicly celebrated in their ſocieties, I am bound to find out ſomewhere in the world that public worſhip to join myſelf thereunto, and to celebrate it together with thoſe other men who exerciſe it in community. But where ſhall I meet with this ſo neceſſary worſhip? God, who refers all things to himſelf, without doubt, never leaves himſelf without that worſhip, which is the ſole end of his work. As he has always produced his creature, for the ſake of the glory which he pleaſes to draw from that worſhip; there can never have been a time wherein he had not formed ſome kind of worſhippers worthy of him. I therefore look round, examining all ages and all nations, to diſcover where that pure worſhip, worthy of the Creator, is to be found.

I ſee a prodigious number of nations that have worſhipped ſtones, wood, metal, and have believed that ſome God-like beings were preſent and affixed to thoſe particular figures of men or beaſts, ſhaped in thoſe different manners; but certainly the Godhead cannot be confined to, nor contained within, thoſe inanimate figures. Beſides, thoſe they have worſhipped, as Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Venus, Mercury, and Bacchus, far from being real gods, were only very vicious, mean, and criminal creatures. Men who worſhip the true God, Creator of the univerſe, and regulate their morals according to that worſhip, deſerve, undoubtedly, a much greater eſteem than ſuch gods, guilty of the groſſeſt vices. Even a heathen has owned that the gods of Homer were very much inferior to his heroes. How ſtrangely degrading of the divinity this is! How impious and indecent was that worſhip of ſo many falſe and unworthy deities, who ſeem to have been invented by ſome ſeducing mind, to turn divinity into ridicule, and to blot out the memory of the true God!

And although ſome ingenious men ſhould ſtrain matters ſo as to reduce paganiſm to the worſhip of one only God, infinitely perfect, adored by different names, and under many different and myſterious figures; when, at

the ſame time, the heathens did not believe polytheiſm: yet can we not avoid confeſſing that this viſible multitude of gods was very indecent and ſcandalous, that borrowed ſyſtem of divinity, and ſpring of impious errors; and it was neceſſary to forſake that variety of names and myſterious repreſentations of them, to reduce the whole divine worſhip to the acknowleging of one only God, ſo perfect as not to have any thing his equal, to be infinitely ſuperior to all things, and having produced every individual thing from the abyſs of nothingneſs, into which he could at pleaſure re-plunge it every moment. Beſides, the pagan religion offered to God no other vows and prayers but ſuch as proceeded from a thirſt after the good things of the earth; they prayed only for health and wealth, for ſuch pleaſures and worldly happineſs as flattered their pride. Such a religion was a diſgrace to divinity, and an authority for all the vices and corruptions of men. But I want, on the contrary, a worſhip worthy of the firſt Being, and that mends my morals. Once more; where ſhall I find that, which certainly cannot but be in ſome corner of the earth, ſince it is only for it's ſake that the earth was made, and that men have been created for no other end, than to celebrate it?

I perceive, in a corner of the earth, a very peculiar people. All others run after idols, all others blindly adore a monſtrous multitude of vicious and deſpicable deities; but that people, whom we call Jews, worſhip but one ſingle God, Creator of heaven and earth: a Jew by the law, to which his whole worſhip is referable, is obliged to love God with all his heart, all his ſoul, all his thought, and with all his might. That circumciſed people have in their law a circumciſion of the heart enjoined them, of which the circumciſion of the body is but a figure; and that circumciſion of the heart is the ſeparation of all affection, which doth not proceed from the principle of the love of God. If I could find upon earth any other race of men, whoſe worſhip was likewiſe to love God, and who made virtue conſiſt in preferring God to themſelves; I would compare that religion with this of the Jews, to examine which was the pureſt and moſt worthy of being followed: but on the other hand, I find, that this God, who owes all things to himſelf, could not create man for any other end, but to pay him a public worſhip of love and obedience; on the other hand, I meet with this worſhip among no other nation beſides the Jews: the pagans have feared their falſe gods, they

were deſirous of appeaſing them, they offered them the fat and blood of beaſts, incenſe in their temples, and other coarſe gifts; but they never gave them their hearts, they never ſo much as thought of loving them, and much leſs to value them above their ownſelves, or to love their ownſelves only for the ſake of their gods. And indeed, they did not take any of them to have been their Creator; Jupiter himſelf, though ſuppoſed much ſuperior in power to all other deities, was not eſteemed to have drawn beings out of nothing; only, according to them, he had found a matter more antient than himſelf, that had exiſted from all eternity, and which he had ſhaped by bringing the chaos into order.

As to the philoſophers, they valued reaſon, juſtice, virtue, and truth only, for the ſake of their intrinſic worth. They believed, that the gods gave health, wealth, and glory, but they pretended to owe virtue and wiſdom, which diſtinguiſhed them from the reſt of men, to none but themſelves, of which they had the ſource in themſelves. They never did unravel either the bounty of the creation, the power of the Creator, or the love we owe him, of valuing him above ourſelves. So that in looking over all the nations of the

earth in paſt times, I can find none but the Jews, that adored the true God, and were acquainted with the worſhip of loving him.

But that love was rather figurative than practical with them: it is rather promiſed there for times to follow, than actually reigning in their hearts. I perceive, in the midſt of that nation, a certain number of righteous filled with that worſhip of love; but the greateſt part only buſied with ceremonies, the ſacrificing of beaſts, and an external worſhip, to obtain of God peace, health, liberty, the dew from heaven, and the fat of the earth. All expect a Meſſiah promiſed to them, and figuratively expreſſed in their myſteries: but ſome, inconſiderable as to their numbers, expect him as one who will purify their morals; renew the heart of man; heal the wounds which ſin has made; ſpread the knowlege and the love of God, and give the face of the earth a new aſpect: the reſt, who make up the multitude, expecting nothing but an earthly, conquering, a proſperous and invincible Meſſiah, who will flatter their pride, reign over all the nations, and heap on the Jews all temporal bleſſings.

Both agree that their religion is yet but a type of what it is to be under the reign of that

that Meſſiah; all agree that, according to thoſe ſcriptures which they ſay are inſpired by God, that Meſſiah is to bring all the idolaters and Gentiles to the worſhip of the true God. Without embracing all the ſubtilties of their rabbins, in the explaining this paſſage of the ſcriptures, it is evident, both by this ſame text, and the meaning of it, which they all agree in, that the Meſſiah is to eſtabliſh everywhere the true worſhip of love, and utterly aboliſh idolatry.

I am loath to enter into all the myſterious ſubtilties of thoſe Jewiſh doctors; it is ſufficient for me to ſee, in groſs, two things, in my opinion, palpable: the one is, that all the periods of time, which the Jews have, from time to time, fixed as the true ſeaſon for the coming of the Meſſiah, are all and every one of them paſſed; that now they will not conſent, that a fixed term ſhould be aſſigned; that they no longer know what to adhere to, as if they had loſt their way; that after ſo long a wandering over the earth, all their tribes are confounded and mixed; that they have not ſo much as any tokens left by which to know their Meſſiah, in caſe he ſhould now come; that for more than ſixteen hundred years paſt they have carried all the marks of

the curſe foretold them in their own books, and which will remain upon them to the laſt, for having not known him, ſent by God.

The other thing I obſerve, is, that Jeſus Chriſt doth bear the ſigns of the true Meſſiah: he has drawn the Gentiles to him according to the promiſes. Of ſo many different, barbarous, and idolatrous nations, he has made one ſingle people, who has deſtroyed the idols, adores the true God Creator, renders him the true worſhip of love, and is united in that worſhip from one end of the world to the other. All Europe is filled with Chriſtians. There are but few kingdoms in Aſia, even beyond the Eaſt-Indies, where you may not find ſome: they have penetrated far beyond all the countries, which made up the world known to the antient Jews, Greeks, and Romans: ſome there are in all thoſe countries of Africa whoſe ports are free: all the vaſt continent of America, called the New World, is governed by them. So that, from the riſing to the ſetting ſun, in the two hemiſpheres, Jeſus is offered to God as a pure and ſpotleſs victim, deſigned to expiate the ſins of the world. All unite themſelves to him to make up with him but one victim of love; and all, who ſin, beat their breaſts to

obtain through him that mercy which they ſtand in need of.

Let us ſet aſide all diſputes about the detail, ſince the whole is ſufficient to decide of all. What is evident without any debate is, that there is on earth none beſides the Jews and the Chriſtians, who ſhow me that worſhip of love, which I ſeek every-where to embrace: I am obliged to fix myſelf for the practice of it with one of theſe two. And between them two I cannot ſeriouſly go about to make a parallel. Though the one and the other partake of imperfections inſeparable from human nature; yet has the Chriſtian ſuch lineaments of perfection as are infinitely above all that the Jews can boaſt of. The Jews themſelves forewarn me by their law, their ceremonies, promiſes, all the circumſtances of their condition, that they poſſeſs the true religion but figuratively; that they are themſelves only like thoſe plaiſter moulds made to caſt a marble or brazen ſtatue in. I find, in the Chriſtian people, compoſed out of all the nations of the known world, the people who was to, and doth, inherit the promiſes, inoculated on the ſtem of Abraham's race; it is the adopted people, that compoſes but one body, and but one

uninterrupted ſucceſſion ſince the patriarchs to our own times: this way I find what I wanted, that is, that worſhip of love, which ought to be as antient as the world, and for whoſe ſake the world itſelf has been made: I can ſee it diſtinctly noted in all ages; it received birth in the garden of Eden; was not extinguiſhed by the ſin of Adam; part of his poſterity preſerved it; it was renewed after the deluge; Abraham removed it into a particular region; Moſes made it more illuſtrious with his ceremonies; the ſaints of the old covenant practiſed it, and foretel it's perfection; whoſe accompliſhment is reſerved for the Meſſiah! Jeſus comes to make us familiar with God, and to teach us the ſelf-denying and unmercenary true worſhip; he comes to teach us, not to live in the midſt of dainty pleaſures and worldly honour, not to butcher beaſts and burn incenſe to God, to draw thereby terreſtrial bleſſings on ourſelves, as the Jews fancied; but to deny ourſelves, to love ourſelves only in him, for him, and with his love. Maugre the infirmities of human nature, a great number is ſeen, whom that pure religion poſſeſſes and animates: that love of the true God creates in them all the virtues oppoſite to ſelf-love.

This is undoubtedly the worſhip I was

looking for. It was with the Jews but figuratively: nothing of it was to be found there but it's ſeed, a ſmall bud and a ſhadow of it: the perfection of it is no where but in that new people which is united to that old one: it is with them I perceive, with the firſt caſt of mine eye, that adoration in ſpirit and in truth; in a word, that love, which alone is the whole law and the prophets.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Chriſtian religion.

WHAT ſeems to me the diſtinguiſhing character of the true worſhip, is not to fear God in the manner as we fear a mighty and terrible man, who cruſhes every one that dares reſiſt him. The heathens offered incenſe and victims to ſome peculiar deities whom they conceived miſchievous and frightful, in order to appeaſe them. This is not the idea I ought to have of God my Creator; he is infinitely juſt and almighty; he deſerves indeed to be feared, but he is frightful only to thoſe who refuſe to love him, and to make themſelves acquainted with him. The moſt

reaſonable fear we ought to be in about him, is that of diſpleaſing him, and of not doing his will. As to the fear of his puniſhments, it is uſeful to men out of the right road, becauſe it counterpoizes their paſſions, and helps to reſtrain their vices: but in ſhort, his fear is only ſo far uſeful as it removes the obſtacles, and, by removing thoſe, diſpoſes men to love. There is no man upon earth that would covet to be feared of his children without being loved by them at the ſame time; the bare fear of puniſhments will never ſway a free and generous ſoul. When a man practiſes virtue from the only motive of that fear, without having any love for true virtue, he only practiſes it to avoid ſufferings; conſequently, if he could avoid puniſhment when he diſpenſes with the practice of virtue, he certainly would not practiſe them. Not only, there is no parent who cares to be honoured thus, nor a friend who will ſtile ſuch his friends as were tied by no other bonds: but there is not a maſter, who would either reward ſervants, or have a kindneſs for them, or chuſe them for his ſervants, if he found them attached to him by no other motive than fear, without any ſentiments of love and good-will: with much more reaſon ought we to believe, that God, who has

made us capable of underſtanding, and of love, for no other end than that of being known and loved by us, is not ſatisfied with a ſlaviſh fear, but wills, that love, which flows from him as from it's ſpring, ſhould return to him as it's end. I even conceive, that it is not ſufficient to love God in the ſame manner we love all things that are convenient and uſeful to us: the end is not to put it out to our own advantage and ſatisfaction; on the contrary, we ought to deliver up ourſelves intirely to him, willing our own good and advantage but in as much as it redounds to his glory, and is conformable to his will, and to the order he has eſtabliſhed in the univerſe.

LETTER IV.

Upon the idea of an infinite Being, and of the liberty God was at, of creating, or of not creating the world.

SIR,

THOUGH neither of us have yet the opportunity of ſeeing and knowing each other, I cannot help entertaining a good opinion of your merit from the letter you have favoured me with. I ſhould be extremely pleaſed if I could make ſuch an anſwer thereunto as would come up to your expectation; but I ſcarce dare hope for it, from the difficulty of the matter in queſtion, and the little leiſure I can ſpare for it. Before I enter upon the ſubject you propoſe, I deſire you would give me leave to explain my general thoughts on philoſophy, which may not be altogether uſeleſs to ſet the propoſed queſtions in a better light.

I begin immediately, Sir, with ſtopping ſhort in a philoſophical debate, as ſoon as I meet with a point of faith that contradicts

ſome philoſophical thought which I am tempted to approve.

Without heſitating in the leaſt, I prefer God's reaſon to my own, and the beſt uſe which I can make of my ſmall underſtanding, is to give it up to his authority. So that, without hearkening to myſelf, I only give ear to that revelation which the church hands down to me, and I deny all that the church bids me diſown. If all the mathematicians in the world did unanimouſly agree in a particular demonſtration of mathematics, and in their account of it to a man of ſenſe, but ignorant in that ſcience to a degree, as not to be even capable of underſtanding that demonſtration; yet ought he to be deemed a prudent man for believing them upon their unanimous aſſertion: the beſt uſe he could make of his unlearned reaſon, would be to ſubmit it to the ſuperior and better informed judgments of ſo many learned men. Ought I not much more to ſubmit my limited reaſon to the infinite reaſon of God? Aſſoon as I conceive it thus, I am prepared to find infinitely more in him than what I am able to conceive. Thus in matters of religion, I believe, without reaſoning, like a weak woman; and I know no other reaſon than

the authority of the church, which tenders me revelation. What diſpoſes me more to this docility, is the repeated occaſions I have to believe firmly, without any diſtruſt, ſuch truths as are abſolutely incomprehenſible to me. For example, whatever ſide I turn myſelf to, endeavouring to believe the diviſibility of contiguous or continued ſubſtances *ad infinitum*, or to believe atoms, I find myſelf utterly incapable to make any intelligible anſwer to the objections, and I find myſelf under a neceſſity of believing what I do not underſtand, and is beyond me. And if I continually experience this in things purely natural, and in regard to the moſt deſpicable atoms, with how much more reaſon ought I to admit ſupernatural truths, of which I am informed by divine revelation, though my feeble reaſon cannot explain them to me? We are at every ſtep, even in philoſophical enquiries, obliged to admit without any ſcruple what is above reaſon itſelf, otherwiſe we ſhould believe nothing at all that is about and moſt familiar to us. Doth a blind man refuſe his belief to a ſeeing man who affirms to him, that there is light and variety of colours, becauſe he can form no idea of either? ought I not to think myſelf as blind in reſpect to ſupernatural truths, as a blind man is

in reſpect to light and colours? Ought I not to be as docile to the authority of God, as a blind man is every day to that of clear-ſighted men? Hence I conclude, that ſome people may pretend, they cannot conceive a propoſition, and that their reaſon ſeems evidently repugnant to it; or elſe, that a certain propoſition ſeems evident to them, and that they are not at liberty to deny their conſent to it, I do deny and affirm, without the leaſt heſitation, whatever religion propoſes to me as an object of my belief or diſbelief. I even go farther, I believe all propoſitions to which my reaſon leads me, though, when I am arrived to them, I cannot afterwards, by the ſtrength of my reaſon, vanquiſh thoſe objections, which I am tempted to hold for demonſtrative arguments againſt thoſe very propoſitions which I have embraced. After having declared to you, how docile I am to religious authority, I think myſelf obliged to let you know how indocile I am to any philoſophical authority. Some are for making Ariſtotle the prince of philoſophers; I appeal to reaſon, which is the judge between Ariſtotle and all other men. Others adjuge the precedency to Des Cartes; but I ſhall anſwer them, that I learned from Des Cartes himſelf, not to believe any body upon a bare aſ-

ſertion. Philoſophy being nothing elſe but reaſon, men ought not therein to follow any other guide than reaſon. Would you have me believe any propoſition in matters of philoſophy; let us lay aſide all great names, and look into the nature of the arguments. Give me clear and diſtinct ideas, and not quotations from authors liable to miſtakes. If authority has any weight in philoſophical matters, it is only to engage us from the eſteem, for certain philoſophers to examine their opinions more attentively. Des Cartes, who durſt ſhake off the yoke of all authority to follow only his own ideas, ought himſelf to claim no authority over us. If I was to believe any philoſopher, barely on account of his reputation, I would much rather believe Plato and Ariſtotle, who, for ſo many ages, were in poſſeſſion of deciding all queſtions: I would even rather believe St. Auſtin, than Des Cartes, in matters merely philoſophical; for beſides that, he knew much better how to reconcile them with religion: we find, moreover, in that father, a much more extended genius concerning all metaphyſical truths, though he never treated of them, but occaſionally, and without method. If a man of learning and judgment was to put together all the ſublime truths which St. Auſtin has

ſcattered throughout his works, as by mere chance; that abſtract, carefully made, would be much ſuperior to the ſo much cried-up Meditations of Des Cartes, though they really were the greateſt production that philoſopher was capable of.

I own to you, Sir, there are ſome things in Des Cartes, which to me ſeem little worthy of him; as, for example, his indefinite world, which is nothing but a ridiculous conception, unleſs it means a real infinite ſubſtance. His proof, of the impoſſibility of a vacuum, is a mere paralogiſmus, wherein he has followed his own fancy, inſtead of following ideas purely intellectual.

There are many other ſubjects wherein he he has not attained to the niceſt and ſtricteſt point of exactneſs; I ſpeak it ſo much more freely, becauſe I am rather otherwiſe prepoſſeſſed in favour of, and have a high eſteem for the genius of that philoſopher. I know there are abundance of ingenious men, who call themſelves Carteſians, and, in my opinion, have embraced ſome too bold opinions, grounding themſelves on Des Cartes's Principia: but without criticiſing or naming any body, I freely let every man reaſon as much as religion permits, and I take myſelf the liberty I grant to others, miſtruſting, however,

my own weak knowlege moſt ſincerely. I own, it ſeems to me, that ſeveral philoſophers of our own time, otherwiſe very eſteemable, have not been exact enough in what they have ſaid upon your two queries; the one, of the nature of the infinite Being; the other, of God's liberty in relation to his external works. Let us now, Sir, if you pleaſe, come to the examination of them.

QUERY I.

Of the nature of the infinite Being.

I CAN conceive but one infinite Being, that is, none but the infinitely perfect Being, or infinite in every kind. Whatever infinite, was infinite only in one kind, could not be taken for a true infinite. Whoever ſays one kind, or one ſpecies, doth manifeſtly imply a limit, and the excluſion of all and every ulterior reality; in which conſiſts the very nature of a finite or limited being. That man has not ſtudied, to the utmoſt point of nicety, the idea of the infinite, who has circumſcribed and incloſed it within the limits of a kind. It is viſible, that it cannot be found

but in the univerſality of that Being, which is the Being infinitely perfect in every kind, and infinitely ſimple; that is, free of all compoſition.

If it was poſſible to conceive infinite ſubſtances, limited to certain particular kinds, it might be truly ſaid, that the being infinitely perfect in all kinds, is infinitely greater than thoſe infinites; for, beſides, that it would equal every one of thoſe infinites in their ſeveral kinds, and would ſurpaſs each of them, by being equal to them altogether; it would, moreover, have a ſupreme ſimplicity, uncompoundedneſs, which would render it infinitely more perfect than that whole collection of pretended infinites.

Beſides, each of thoſe ſubaltern infinites would be limited exactly, where it's own kind was limited; and thereby make it unequal to that Being which is infinite in every kind.

Whoever ſays an inequality between two beings, doth neceſſarily indicate a particular place, where the one doth terminate, and the other doth not end; ſo that it is a contradiction to admit two unequal infinite beings.

I can even comprehend but one, ſince one only, by it's real infinity, excludes all limit in all kind, and fills itſelf the whole idea of an infinite Being: beſides, as I have already

obſerved, no infinite, that was not ſimple, could truly be ſtiled an infinite: the want of unity is an imperfection; for between two perfections, otherways equal, it is more perfect to be entirely one than to be compound; that is, than to be but a collection of particular beings. And it muſt be owned, that to be limited is an imperfection; therefore ſuch an imperfection of diviſibility is oppoſite to the nature of the true infinite, which has no limits. It may be thought, perhaps, that this is but a vain ſubtilty; but if men will but ſincerely miſtruſt, and lay aſide certain prejudices, they will eaſily be made ſenſible, that a compound infinite, is infinite only by name; and that it is actually and really limited by the imperfection of all diviſible beings, and can only be reduced to the unity of a particular kind. This will be more evident, by making ſome very ſimple and very natural ſuppoſitions concerning thoſe pretended infinites, in reality no more than compound beings. Give me a diviſible infinite; it muſt needs have an infinite number of parts actually diſtinct from each other: take away from it a parcel as ſmall as you pleaſe; as ſoon as it is taken off, I aſk you, whether that which remains is ſtill an infinite ſubſtance or not? If it be not infinite, I maintain, that the to-

tal, before the removal of that ſmall parcel; was not a true infinite Being: ſee here the proof of it; no compound finite, to which you had re-joined a very ſmall parcel, firſt taken from it, could become an infinite by that re-union; therefore it would remain finite after the re-union: conſequently it was a truly finite being before the ſeparation of that parcel. And indeed, what can be more ridiculous, than to dare ſay, that "the ſame "whole, all, is ſometimes finite, and ſome-"times infinite," according as you either remove from, or rejoin a ſort of an atom to it? What! do the infinite and the finite differ only for having that atom more or leſs?

If, on the contrary, that whole remains infinite, after you have cut a ſmall parcel from it, we muſt own, that there are infinites unequal to each other; for it is manifeſt, that this whole was bigger before, than ſince the removal of that parcel. It is clearer than the ſun, that the removing of a part cauſes a leſſening of the whole, in proportion to the bigneſs of that part. Now, it is a complete abſurdity, to affirm, that the ſame infinite, continuing always infinite, is ſometimes bigger, and ſometimes leſs.

The ſide, from which you cut off a parcel, is viſibly ended, or limited, where the par-

cel was cut off. The infinite is no longer an infinite on that ſide, ſince it there finds a remarkable end: that infinite is therefore imaginary; and never can a diviſible being prove a real infinite. Men, having the idea of the infinite, have applied it in a very improper manner, and contrary to the true idea of it to all theſe beings, which they would give no limits to in their kind; but they have not obſerved, that every kind is in itſelf a limit, and that all diviſibility, being an imperfection, which is likewiſe a viſible limit, doth exclude the true infinite, which is a Being without limits in perfection.

Being, unity, truth, and goodneſs, are the ſame things; ſo that whatever is an infinite Being, is infinitely one, infinitely true, infinitely good. Conſequently it is infinitely perfect and indiviſible.

Thence I conclude, that nothing is a greater contradiction than an imperfect infinite, and conſequently a limited one: nothing more abſurd than an infinite which is not infinitely one: nothing more inconceivable than an infinite not infinitely one: nothing more inconceivable than an infinite diviſible, in ſeveral parcels, whether you call them finite or infinite. Thoſe chimerical infinite ſubſtances may be imagined by ſome groſs and unthinking peo-

ple, but never clearly conceived. It is even impoſſible there ſhould be two infinites, for both put together muſt infallibly be bigger than each of them ſeparately, and conſequently neither the one nor the other could be a true infinite. Beſides, the collection of thoſe two infinites would be diviſible, and conſequently imperfect, whereas each of them would be indiviſible and perfect in themſelves; ſo that one ſingle infinite would prove more perfect than the two together. If, on the contrary, we did ſuppoſe, that the two joined together would be more perfect than each of them ſeparately, it would follow, that dividing would be degrading of them.

I conclude, therefore, that it is impoſſible to conceive more than one infinite, ſtrictly one, true and perfect.

QUERY II.

Upon God's liberty of creating, or not creating the world.

UNDOUBTEDLY, Sir, you judged rightly, that when I ſaid it was a greater perfection in a being to be fruitful than not

to be ſo, I did not deſign to deſcribe an actual production, but a virtue or power to produce out of itſelf: thus is it daily ſaid, that a land is very furitful, though it lie really fallow, becauſe it is capable of producing the moſt plentiful crops. It may, perhaps, be objected, that the act is a greater perfection than the power, and that it is a greater perfection actually to operate, than to have only the power of operating: but this reaſoning is fallacious, and to put it in a true light, I deſire you will conſider the following poſitions.

It is true, that in the ſchool language, "the "act perfects the power, and is the fulneſs "of it." But ſee here all that is real in that aſſertion.

1*ſt*, Philoſophers ſpeak of the act as of a being diſtinct from power and action, and which is the end and limit of action itſelf. In that ſenſe, the end is the fulneſs which perfects the power. No Carteſian can affirm this ſeriouſly.

2*dly*, Whoever ſays pure power, or mere power, means a ſimple capacity of exiſting; on the contrary, act implies an exiſtence, and a perfection already exiſting and actual. In a word, that which is only *in poſſe* is but poſſible, and what is already in act doth exiſt actually already. And is it not manifeſt,

that it is a greater perfection to be actually existing, than to be only *in posse*, or possible?

Pray observe, that the same being may, at the same time, be in power for some peculiar things, and in act for some others. It is what daily happens to all finite and created beings; for on one hand it is already in act for whatever it has already received of existence and action; but on the other hand, it is only *in posse*, for every thing it is yet to receive, and of which, by it's present existence, it has only the bare power or capacity to receive it.

In this sense it is again manifest, that it is a greater perfection to be in act than only *in posse*. But all this has no manner of relation to the power and the act of particular actions, which men are free to do, or not to do; and which sometimes they are in the right to leave undone. For example, I am not more perfect when I speak than when I do not speak; it even happens often that I am more perfect in being silent than in speaking.

The perfection consists in the power of doing that action, to which I make no addition by doing it; otherwise I should be blameable for not giving myself a perfection which was in my power, as often as I remain silent out of prudence.

It is true, that the soul is always in action,

it always, at leaſt confuſedly, knows ſome truth or other, and in proportion wills ſome good action, but it is not neceſſitated to do any one particular action before another.

It is not true, according to the fore-mentioned example, that the action of ſpeaking is in itſelf more perfect than the ſimple power of doing it.

If it is no greater perfection in man actually to perform ſuch a thing than ſimply to have the power to perform it, this is yet more evidently plain in God; we muſt at leaſt own, that every operation of the creature is a modification of it's own conferring. It is true, likewiſe, that it always operates, and conſequently always modifies itſelf, ſometimes one way, ſometimes another; but when it chuſes, the beſt operation that it gives itſelf by that choice, is the moſt perfect modification. It is not ſo with God. By his infinite, uncompounded, and immutable being he is incapable of all modifications; for a modification would be a limit; his operation is nothing but himſelf, without adding any thing to it. If his operation did add any thing to his perfection, he would not be God; for it would follow, that he would not have of himſelf infinite perfection independently of his action out of himſelf.

In that caſe, his operation without would be eſſential to his Godhead, and make part of it. Moreover, his outward work, which is no more than his creature, if it could not be ſeparated from his fruitful operation; that work, I ſay, would be eſſential to his infinite perfection, and conſequently to his Godhead: we ſhould not be able to conceive the one without the other; the one would not depend upon the other. The creature would be eſſential to the Creator, and be confounded and mixed with him. The infinite perfection could not be found but in that total of God, operating without, and in his work. The creature being neceſſary to the Creator himſelf, from his eſſence, would ceaſe to be a creature. We ſhould be obliged to place it in the ſame rank with the perſons of the holy Trinity, and, together with the Father, Son, and holy Ghoſt, make a fourth perſon of it. In that caſe, God ſhould be neceſſitated eternally to produce whatever he was capable to produce moſt perfectly. He ſhould himſelf be that production: he ſhould be no longer God, than as he was actually doing it. He never could be at liberty not to do it, if we did not conceive him to have exiſtence, at leaſt one moment before he began to produce. We ſhould be obliged to ſay, that when he

began to produce, that then he began to make himſelf perfect, and to become God. In a word, the creature ſhould be ſo eſſential to the Creator, that it would be impoſſible to make any real diſtinction betwixt them; and men would be accuſtomed not to ſeek for any other infinitely perfect Being, but that whole collective body of beings, called creatures.

What ſhall we do then not to fall into that monſtrous impiety? We muſt ſay, that God is not more perfect, when he doth operate out of himſelf than when he doth not operate; becauſe he is always almighty and infinitely fruitful; even when he is not pleaſed to exerciſe that fruitful power.

Thereby we know that God is free with a ſupreme liberty, of which ours is but a feeble reſemblance, and a ſmall ſhare.

Thereby we know the gratitude which is due to the intirely free gift of the creation. Thereby we enter into the true ſpirit and meaning of the holy ſcripture, which tells us, that God finiſhed his work in ſeven days: he did not do it at one ſimple act, he did break off in the midſt of it; by little and little, and different degrees, did he bring his work to his propoſed end: he gave it every day a new and particular form, and, in different

taſks,

taſks, he gave it an increaſe of perfection. Every thing was each day found good and worthy of him, yet he made it ſtill better afterwards, and more finiſhed. Thereby he ſhewed how much he was the maſter of his whole work, ſo as to give as much and as little perfection as he ſhould think fit. He might have ſtopped his hand after the production of a ſhapeleſs heap of matter, and he was free to make out of that maſs the work full of variety and ornaments, which it pleaſed him to make, and is called, the univerſe.

Nothing, therefore, is more falſe than what I hear ſome people ſay, to wit, that the order of things, which is himſelf, doth neceſſitate God to produce every thing which he was able to form, moſt perfect. This reaſoning tends to prove, that the actual production of God is eternal, and eſſential to the Creator. This reaſoning would prove, that God could not withhold himſelf in any thing when he created the world, that he was no ways free to do it, but was forced to make it all at once, and even to produce it from all eternity. It would thence follow, that God was as much conſtrained, as to the manner of acting, as to the very bottom of his work. According to that principle, it was neceſſary,

upon pain of violating order, and degrading himſelf, that he ſhould produce his work, and perfect it in the ſimpleſt manner. In a word, if this principle holds true, God's omnipotence was exhauſted in a moment. He cannot henceforth produce one ſimple atom more; he is abſolutely incapable of adding the leaſt degree of perfection to the meaneſt atom in the univerſe. If any thing is unworthy of God, it is ſuch an idea of him.

How much more noble and juſtly doth St. Auſtin think about the Godhead? That father imagines to himſelf degrees of perfection, either infinitely aſcending or deſcending, which God beholds at one ſingle view. He ſees none, that doth not remain infinitely below his own infinite perfection. He may riſe as high as he pleaſes in finiſhing the plan of his work; his work muſt always remain infinitely below him. He may deſcend as low as he pleaſes, his work muſt always be good, perfect, according to it's meaſure, diſtinct from nothingneſs, and worthy of the infinite Being. God, chuſing betwixt all thoſe infinite degrees of perfection, doth call or not call nothingneſs to become a being, is bound to nothing, and calls all things. His infinite ſuperiority above his work, makes, that he can have no manner of occaſion for it: the

very glory, which he draws from it, is, as it were, ſo accidental, that it is within his own pleaſure, and the pure choice of his will.

He has been at liberty to create the world as ſoon and as late as he has thought fit; but the ſooneſt comes only after his eternity, and the lateſt is ſtill followed by that ſame eternity, which remains entire and undivided.

In a word, whatſoever extent he had given to the duration of the univerſe, it ſtill would have been ſomething finite in the infinite; it would have been comprehended and incloſed in the indiviſible eternity of it's author.

St. Auſtin, writing againſt the Manichei, repreſents that goodneſs of the work, and that liberty of the workman, as intirely depending upon his pleaſure in what degree to fix it. In all things, ſays that antient father, there is nothing but the different degrees of exiſtence, becauſe to be, and to be perfect, is the very ſame thing.

It is by thoſe different degrees that God diverſifies his work: all that exiſts is good and perfect in a certain kind. That which is leſs, is leſs perfect; that which is more, is more perfect; but whatſoever is, in whatſoever low degree it be, is worthy of God, becauſe it has a being, and there is occaſion for an almigh-

ty wiſdom to draw it out of nothingneſs. At the ſame time, every created being, howſoever perfect we conceive it, has but a limited degree of exiſtence, to which it could not riſe but by the almighty wiſdom of him, who drew it out of nothing. Every creature, therefore, finds itſelf in that middle poſition, between thoſe two extremes in the infinity of God himſelf.

God ſees nothing that is not infinitely below himſelf. That infinite inferiority of all created beings, of the higheſt and the loweſt degrees, puts them all in a ſort of equality before his eyes. Not one of them has that ſuperiority of infinite perfection as to prove to God an invincible argument why he ſhould prefer it to others. At which degree of all he may ſtop, he always neceſſarily ſtops at ſuch a one that proves finite, and infinitely below himſelf. That infinite inferiority is the reaſon why no poſſible perfection can have the force of compelling him: and his infinite ſuperiority over all poſſible perfection, is the very conſtituent reaſon of this liberty in chuſing. See here, Sir, what I imagine to have learned of St. Auſtin, about the liberty of God in the production of his works without himſelf. I wiſh I was at liberty to diſcourſe with you more amply on all theſe ſubjects, and

I ſhould, with as much pleaſure, receive whatever you ſhould be ſo kind to impart to me: for I do not queſtion, but that you have deeply ſearched into them: but having under my care a large dioceſe upon the frontiers, where the war does much increaſe our troubles; enjoying but a weak ſtate of health; and being beſides much taken up with my controverſial writings concerning grace, I cannot allow myſelf the leiſure I could wiſh for meditating on metaphyſics.

LETTER V.

Concerning the truth of religion, and it's practice.

SIR,

IN my opinion you have three things to do: Firſt, To ſet in as true a light as poſſible the fundamental articles of religion, if you ſhould entertain any doubt about thoſe, or ſhould feel in yourſelf a want of a lively and diſtinct perſuaſion of them. Secondly, To examine your conſcience upon your paſt conduct. Thirdly, To lay down to yourſelf the plan of a Chriſtian-like courſe of life for the future.

I.

NOTHING truly ſolid can be objected againſt the truths of religion. A great number of them, and thoſe the moſt fundamental, are conformable to reaſon. They are rejected only through pride, a petulant looſeneſs of the mind, the luxuriancy of the paſſions,

and the fear of ſubmitting to a yoke too cumberſome: for example, it is eaſy to perceive, that we have not made ourſelves: that we have begun to be what we were not an hundred years ago: that our bodies, whoſe frame and matter is full of ſprings ſo aptly contrived, cannot but be the work of a marvellous induſtry and power: that the univerſe diſcovers, in all it's parts, the art of the ſupreme maker who has formed it: that our weak reaſon is every moment ſet right within us by another ſuperior reaſon, which we conſult, and which rebukes us; which we cannot alter, becauſe it is unalterable; and which changes us, becauſe we have occaſion for it. All men, in all places, aſk advice of it. It returns an anſwer in China, as well as in France or America. It is not divided by communicating itſelf. What it beſtows on me of it's rays, robs none of thoſe who were already filled with it. It lends itſelf out every moment without meaſure, and yet is never exhauſted. It is a ſun whoſe light enlightens the mind, as the viſible ſun does the body. That light is eternal and immeaſurable. It comprehends all times, as well as all places. It is not myſelf, ſince it rebukes and corrects me, even contrary to my inclination: con-

ſequently it is above me, and above all ſuch weak and imperfect men as I am. That ſupreme reaſon, which is the rule of my own; that wiſdom from which every wiſe man receives what he has; that ſuperior ſpring of light whence we borrow all, is the very God we are looking for. He exiſts of himſelf, and we have no being but through him. He has made us like unto himſelf; that is, reaſonable creatures; that we might know him as the infinite truth, and love him as the immenſe goodneſs; that is, religion; for religion is love. To love God, and make other men love him, is the practice of the moſt perfect worſhip. God is our father, we are his children. The earthly fathers are not ſuch fathers as he, they are the ſhadow of him. We owe him our knowlege, life, being, and all that we are. Shall we, who abhor ingratitude ſo much from man to man, on account of the leaſt obligations, glory upon our monſtrous ingratitude toward that father, of whom we have received the foundations of our being? Shall we inceſſantly uſe the gifts of his love, to violate his law, and to provoke him? Theſe are the fundamental truths of religion, which reaſon itſelf points out and comprehends. Religion adds no more to our worldly probity, but the comfort, but the doing

out of love, and gratitude, for our heavenly Father, what reaſon itſelf requires of us to do, for the ſake of virtue.

It is true, that religion propoſes ſome other truths to us, which are called myſteries, and are incomprehenſible: but ought we to be ſurpvized that man, who knows neither the ſprings of his own body, which he uſes every moment, nor the thoughts of his mind, which he cannot unravel to himſelf, ſhould not comprehend the ſecrets of God? Shall we wonder that the finite cannot equal nor exhauſt the infinite? We might ſay, that religion would not bear the character of the infinite, out of whoſe boſom it proceeds, if it ſurpaſſed in nothing but our ſhort and feeble underſtanding. It is worthy of God, and fitted to our neceſſities, that our reaſon ſhould be humbled and confounded by the overbearing authority of thoſe myſteries we cannot penetrate into.

Beſides, religion offers us nothing but what is conſonant to reaſon, lovely, moving, worthy of admiration, in all that relates to the ſentiments it inſpires us with, and the moral virtues it requires of us. The only point capable of making our heart rebel, is the obligation of loving God more than ourſelves, and

to refer us intirely to him. But what is more juſt, than to return all to him from whom we receive all; and to return that ſelf to him which we hold from him only? What is more unjuſt, on the contrary, than to be ſo backward in embracing ſo juſt and ſo reaſonable an opinion? We muſt be ſtrangely deviated, and of a corrupt nature, to rebel againſt ſo legitimate a ſubordination. It is that blind, untamed, inſatiate, and tyrannical ſelf-love, that covets all for itſelf, renders us idolatrous of ourſelves, which makes us deſire to be the centre of the whole world, and that God himſelf ſhould ſerve no other turn than to flatter our vain appetites. It is that which is the antagoniſt of the love of God. This is the deep wound of our heart. This is the great principle of irreligion. When will man do himſelf juſtice? When will he take his own due place? When will he ceaſe to love himſelf unreaſonably, and but proportionably to what he is love-worthy; and prefer to himſelf not only God, who bears no compariſon, but beſides all public advantage to the ſociety of other men, imperfect like himſelf? Once more, this is the total of religion, to know and to love God; "That is the whole man," as Solomon ſays. All the reſt does not truly belong to man: it

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is no more than man of a depraved, corrupt nature, degraded from himſelf; man loſing all becauſe he would fooliſhly ſecure all to himſelf; and who goes a-begging a falſe happineſs from the creature, whilſt he deſpiſes the true happineſs which the Creator offers him. What is put in the room of that infinite good? Shameful pleaſure, a phantom of honour; the eſteem of thoſe very men we deſpiſe.

When you ſhall have thus ſettled and rooted the principles of religion in your heart, it will be needful to examine your conſcience, to repair the faults of your paſt conduct.

II.

THE firſt ſtep towards that examination, is to put yourſelf in thoſe diſpoſitions you owe to God. Have you a mind to make a man of quality ſenſible, that he has committed faults againſt his worldly honour, in a manner unworthy of his birth? Begin with making him ſenſible of the noble and virtuous ſentiments, which probity and honour ought to inſpire him with; then will he have a moſt lively ſenſe of the very leaſt faults of that kind he ſhall have committed; he will make moſt bitter reproaches to himſelf about

it, he will be aſhamed of it, and ſcarce admit of comfort. That we may be ſorry for our faults, we muſt have printed in our hearts the love of thoſe virtues, which are directly the oppoſite of thoſe faults. Will you exactly diſcern the faults you have committed againſt God? Begin with loving him. It is the love of God that will enlighten you, and give you a lively ſorrow of your ingratitude to that infinite goodneſs. Aſk of a man who knows not God, and is indifferent towards him, in what he has offended him, you will find him groſly ignorant of his faults: he neither knows what God requires, nor in what particular we can be wanting to him. It is love only which gives us a nice diſcernment as to our ſins. Open your eyes in a dark place, you will perceive nothing in the air; but open them near a window to the rays of the ſun, you will diſcover even the leaſt atoms. Learn, therefore, to know the goodneſs of God, and all that is due to him. Begin with loving him, and love will perform that ſearch of your conſcience, better than you can do it yourſelf. Love, and that love will be inſtead of memory to you, to make you tender, and at the ſame time comfortable reproaches about every thing you ever did againſt that very love. Behold a

lively and ſincere return of friendſhip between two people that had differed, nothing eſcapes their notice of what had cauſed the rupture and diſ-union of their hearts. You will aſk me, how any body can give himſelf that love which he does not feel, chiefly when it is concerning an unforeſeen object that never filled our fancy? I anſwer, Sir, that you daily love things you do not ſee. Do you ſee the wiſdom of your friend? Do you ſee his ſincerity, courage, diſintereſtedneſs, or his virtue? No! you cannot ſee thoſe objects with the eyes of the body, yet you eſteem them, and you love them, ſo as to prefer them in him to riches, graceful ſhape and mein, and every thing that could greatly pleaſe the eyes. Love God's wiſdom and ſupreme goodneſs, as you love the imperfect wiſdom and goodneſs of your friend: if you cannot come up to the ſame ſort of love which you feel to ſenſible objects; at leaſt, let your will deſire to prefer him to all other beings, which is the very eſſential point of this love.

But this very love is not in your power, it does not depend upon yourſelf to give it you; you muſt deſire it, aſk it, wait for it, endeavour to merit it, and think it a misfortune to be without it. With St. Auſtin, you muſt ſay to God, with an humble heart, "*O an-*

" *tient, and yet always new beauty, I have* " *known thee and loved thee too late!* O! " how many years have I loſt? Whom " have I lived for, ſince I did not live for " thee?" The leſs you feel of that love, the more you ought to entreat God to kindle it in your heart. Tell him, you deſire it with the ſame eagerneſs, as a ſtarved beggar prays for a bit of bread. O! how poor is my heart! how is it reduced to beggary! " O thou, who art ſo lovely, and yet ſo lit- " tle beloved, cauſe me to love thee, call " back, to it's centre, my miſguided love! " uſe me to be familiarly converſant with " thee: draw me wholly to thee, that I may " form a cordial friendſhip with thee, who " art the only true friend. O God! what " have I not loved beſides thee! My heart " is worn out in the moſt vitious paſſions. I " am aſhamed of what I have loved; and am " yet more aſhamed of what I have not lov- " ed. 'Till now my food has been naſtineſs " and poiſon: I have ſcornfully rejected the " heavenly bread; I have deſpiſed the foun- " tain of living waters; I have dug myſelf " muddy and unwholeſome ſprings; I have " fooliſhly followed falſhood, and have ſhut " mine eyes to truth; I would not ſee the " abyſs of perdition juſt gaping in my way.

" O my God! thou haſt not forgot him who " was unmindful of thee: thou haſt loved " me, though I did not love thee; and haſt " had compaſſion on my errors. Thou ſeek- " eſt him who did ſhun thee." As ſoon as you ſhall be thus ſincerely moved, every particular of that ſelf-examination will become eaſy to you. The ſhells, as it were, will at once drop from your eyes: you will ſee through, with the piercing eyes of love, thoſe things which no other eyes can diſtinguiſh; then you muſt ſtop a while inſtead of going on too faſt: 'till then it would have been in vain to attempt haſtening you forwards; ſelf-love would have kept you back, with a thouſand thoughts unworthy the worſhip of God.

As for the detail of your examination, it will not be difficult. Examine yourſelf in your ſeveral political and civil employments, as you are the lord of a mannor, the general of an army, maſter of your ſervants, and a man of diſtinction and quality in the world: then obſerve in what points you have been wanting to religion, by too bold diſcourſes; to charity, by ſpeaking things detrimental to your neighbour; to modeſty, by immodeſt expreſſions; to juſtice, by neglecting your affairs, and not paying your debts. Remember your groſs paſſions, which, perhaps, have

hurried you along; your neighbour, to whom you have given a bad example, and of the ſcandal you have occaſioned. When a man has, for a long time, lived up to his predominant paſſions far from God, it is almoſt impoſſible to remind every particular action; but without that detail it is enough explained in a general muſter, in accuſing one's ſelf of thoſe vices, which have been habitual for the courſe of ſo many years.

III.

As to futurity, it behoves you to regulate the bottom of your heart, to regulate your conduct. Every one lives according to his deſire. It is the object of every one's love, that determines and directs his conduct. When you loved nothing but yourſelf, and your pleaſure, you trampled upon God. Luxury is become your God. You urged on your pleaſures even to covetouſneſs, as St. Paul expreſſes himſelf; you were inſatiable of ſenſualities, as covetous men are of money; by deſiring to poſſeſs yourſelf independently from God, to enjoy every thing without meaſure, you have loſt all; you have not truly poſſeſſed yourſelf, but only delivered yourſelf up to the tyranny of your poſſeſſi-

ons, and have almoſt entirely deſtroyed yourſelf. What a frenzy of ſelf-love is this! Return then, return to God; he waits for you, he invites you, and extends his arms to receive you: he loves you much more than you know how to love yourſelf. Conſult him in an humble manner, to know of him what it is he requires of you. Say to him what St. Paul ſaid to him, with ſo much humility, at the inſtant of his converſion, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

When you are uſed to prayer, then with a deliberate and pious advice, make to yourſelf a plan of an eaſy and ſimple life, which you may be able to hold on, and which may put you out of danger of relapſes. Chuſe ſuch company as may be an indication of the change worked in your heart. A true friend of God can never chuſe to live with his enemies. The more he feels in his heart a taſte of the humour and converſation of the libertines, the more he will ſhun them, for fear of relapſing with them into libertiniſm. The leaſt man can give to God, is to feel his frailty; to miſtruſt himſelf after ſo many fatal experiments; it is to avoid that danger, which he ought to think himſelf able to overcome. Make choice, therefore, of ſuch companions with whom you may love God, become

leſs fond of this world, and find your ſolid comfort in virtue. Avoid grimaces and affecting to be ſingular: let your piety be ſimple, entirely directed towards all the duties of the ſphere you are in, and nouriſhed with that courage, confidence, and peace, which are the fruits of a good conſcience, and a ſincere union with God.

Regulate your expences; take all the meaſures in your power to make your creditors eaſy; conſider what good you are able to do in the place where you live; how much you can leſſen irregularities and abuſes, and ſtand by and ſupport juſtice and religion.

Chuſe ſuch occupations in the interval of your affairs as may be uſeful. If you read, chuſe uſeful ſubjects; read books of ſolid piety to comfort your heart, and good hiſtorians to divert yourſelf innocently.

But what I requeſt of you above all, is to retire into your cloſet, the firſt half quarter of an hour every morning, and the laſt at night, to be in a hearty and familiar converſation with your God. You aſk me, how you ſhall be able to compoſe a prayer? never fear, but if you are heartily in earneſt, you will make an excellent one. In what manner are you uſed to ſpeak to your friends? Is half a quarter of an hour's converſation with a friend

tedious? God is that faithful friend who is not tired with your refuſals, whilſt all other friends neglect you, becauſe you leave off to be a partner of their pleaſures. Tell him every thing, hearken to him on all accounts, re-enter often within yourſelf to find him there; *The kingdom of God is within yourſelf*, ſays Jeſus Chriſt. We need not go far to fetch it, ſince it is ſo near to ourſelves: He will like any thing; he deſires only your heart; he wants no compliments, nor your ſtudied or elegant proteſtations pronounced with heat or paſſion. If your imagination ſhould wander and loſe itſelf, return gently into the preſence of God: do not make yourſelf uneaſy; do not make of prayer a contention of the mind; do not look upon God as a maſter who is not to be approached otherwiſe than with a formal addreſs, and troubleſome ceremony. That liberty and familiarity which proceeds from love, will never leſſen true reſpect and obedience. Your prayer will not be perfect, till you be more familiarly converſant, without conſtraint, with your true boſom friend, than you are with all thoſe imperfect friends of the world. You aſk me what penance you muſt do for your ſins; I anſwer you, what Jeſus Chriſt did to the adultereſs; *I will not condemn you, but*

take heed to ſin no more. Your chief penance ought to be patiently bearing afflictions, to be crucified with Jeſus Chriſt, to looſen yourſelf from the bondage of this painful, miſerable, frail life, and make a ſacrifice of it to God, if required, with an humble courage. O the excellent penance to hold one's ſelf under the hand of God between life and death! Is it not repairing all the faults of a paſt life, to be patient under ſufferings, and ready to lay down a life, when it ſhall pleaſe God, of which you had made ſo ill an uſe? Theſe, Sir, are the chief things which I would adviſe you to; I deſire you will receive them as the marks of my being ſincerely

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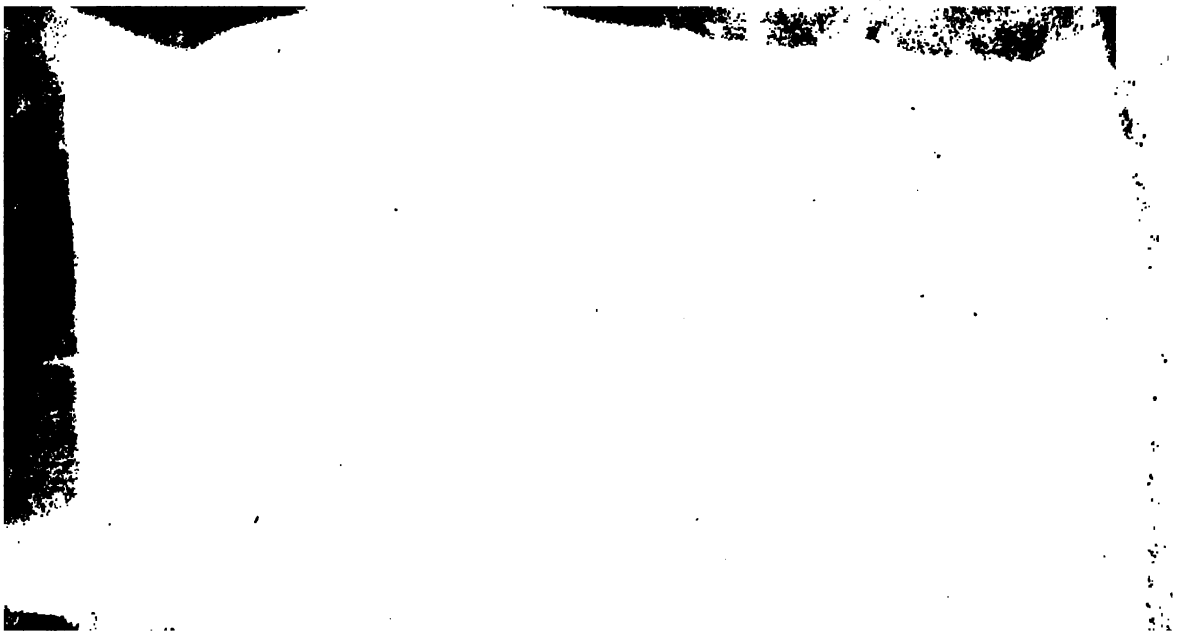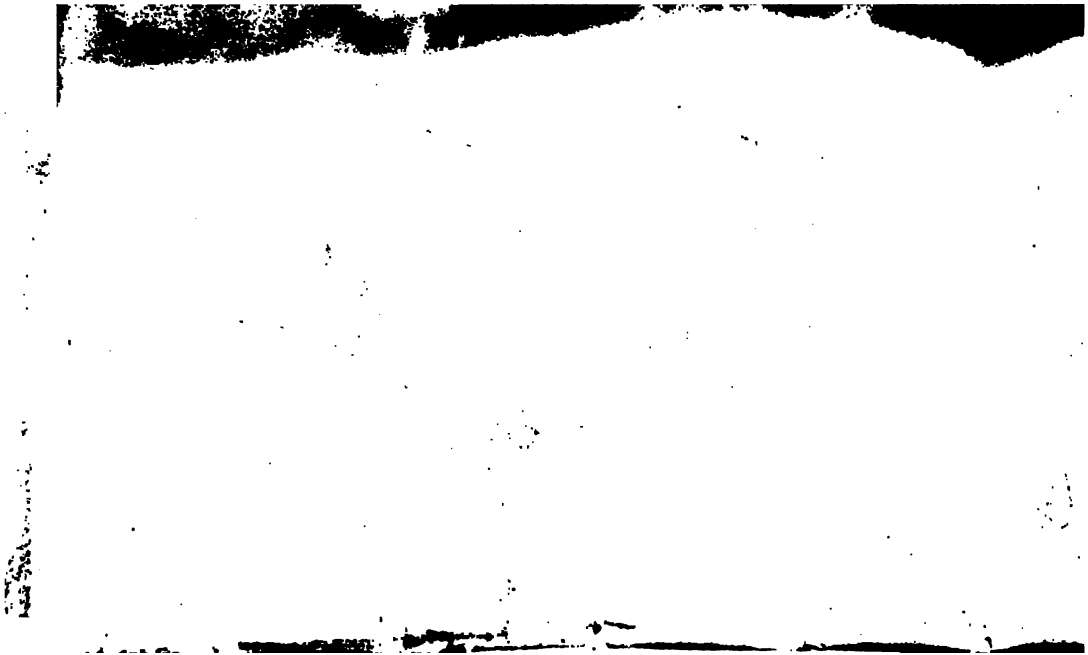
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